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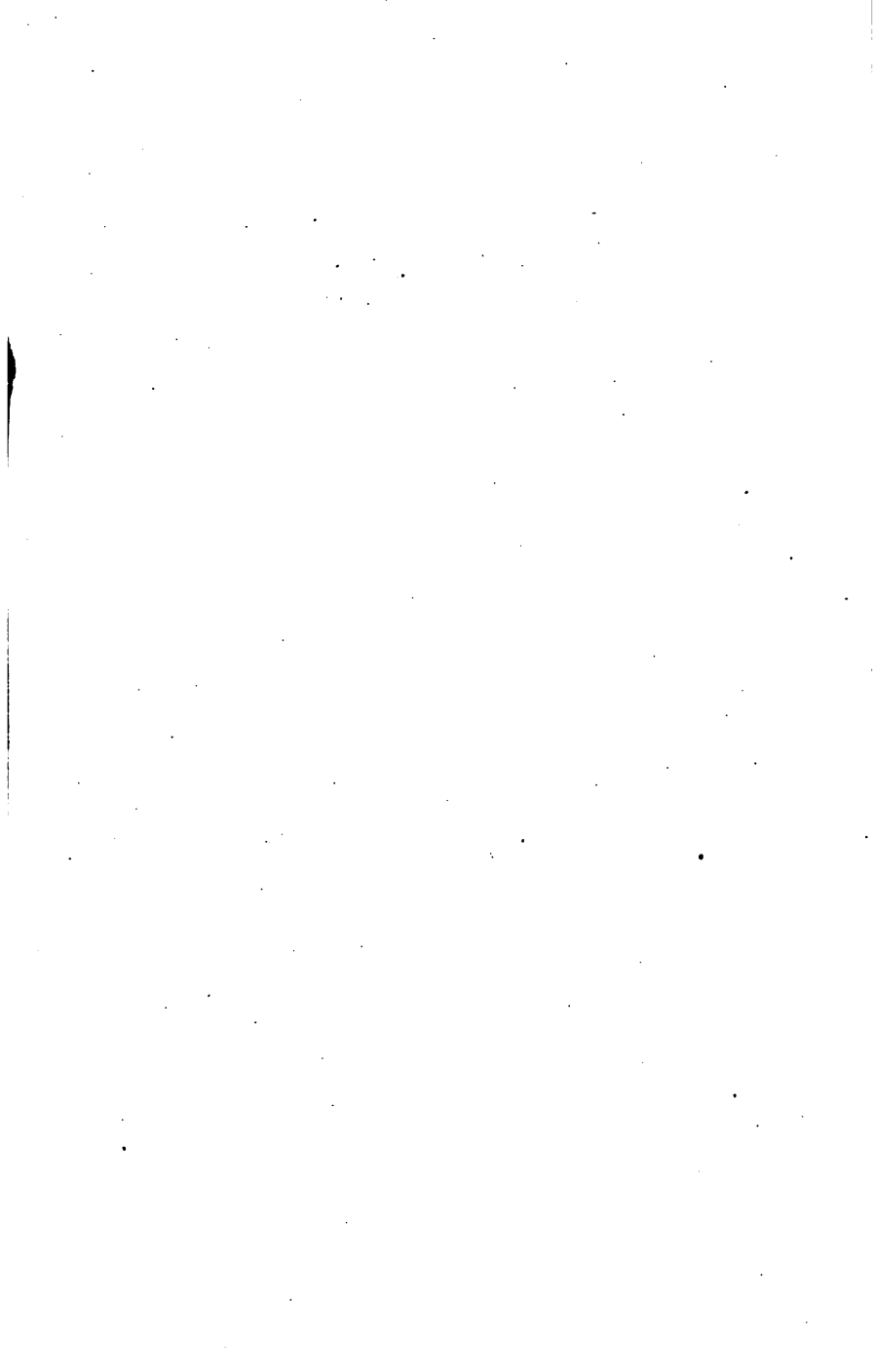
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*OUR NEW RECTOR.*

*R. Clay, Son, and Taylor, Printers,  
Bread Street Hill.*

# OUR NEW RECTOR;

OR, THE

## *VILLAGE OF NORTON.*

EDITED BY

CUTHBERT BEDE,

AUTHOR OF

"MR. VERDANT GREEN."



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# CONTENTS.



CHAPTER I.	
	PAGE
<i>The Tea-party—Introduces Miss Chirp</i> . . . .	I
CHAPTER II.	
<i>Family Livings</i> . . . . .	16
CHAPTER III.	
<i>Helen</i> . . . . .	25
CHAPTER IV.	
<i>The Doctor's Family</i> . . . . .	30
CHAPTER V.	
<i>The Abbey.</i> . . . .	40
CHAPTER VI.	
<i>A Christening—a Departure</i> . . . . .	54
	CHAPTER

CHAPTER VII.	PAGE
<i>How Pop took in Miss Pry, and how Mrs. Jackson takes in Mr. Harry Wildman . . . . .</i>	63

CHAPTER VIII.	
<i>Alice . . . . .</i>	70

CHAPTER IX.	
<i>Dame Haggins . . . . .</i>	81

CHAPTER X.	
<i>A Party at the Abbey . . . . .</i>	92

CHAPTER XI.	
<i>The Fifth of November . . . . .</i>	108

CHAPTER XII.	
<i>Helen again . . . . .</i>	119



## PART II.

CHAPTER I.	
<i>Another Rector . . . . .</i>	128

CHAPTER II.	
<i>News from the Crimea . . . . .</i>	145
CHAPTER	

# Contents.

vii

	PAGE
CHAPTER III.	
<i>How we are going on in the Village</i> . . . . .	165
CHAPTER IV.	
<i>Mabel</i> . . . . .	180
CHAPTER V.	
<i>The Sunbeam passes away</i> . . . . .	200
CHAPTER VI.	
<i>Mr. Hope finds the Rectory unfurnished</i> . . . . .	209
CHAPTER VII.	
<i>The Confessions of Dame Haggins</i> . . . . .	228
CHAPTER VIII.	
<i>How Lord Percy Fitz-Loftus prospered in his Woing</i> . . . . .	249
CHAPTER IX.	
<i>The Heiress</i> . . . . .	266
CHAPTER X.	
<i>Heroes from the Crimea</i> . . . . .	279
CHAPTER XI.	
<i>Conclusion</i> . . . . .	290





## OUR NEW RECTOR.



### CHAPTER I.

THE TEA-PARTY—INTRODUCES MISS CHIRP.

“The bubbling and loud hissing urn  
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,  
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each.”—COWPER.

BLESS me! *Kitty!* run to the Door, don't keep the dear Creatures shivering in the Cold on such a Night as this, take them into the Red Room, warm their Feet, and receive their Cloaks—and stay, whatever you do, don't forget the Crumpets; and you come with me, *Ben Hassan*, whatever happens, and whoever arrives, *you* shall have the most comfortable Place in my Parlour as long as my Name is *Teresa Chirp.*”

*Chirp.*" So saying, the old Lady trotted into the next Room, to be ready to receive her Visitors, accompanied by the favoured *Ben Hassan*, who, I must inform my Readers, was a huge Persian of the Feline Species, who carried a Tail like a Comet, and wore a Ruff, like "good Queen *Bess*;" and who was never known to be guilty of shedding the Blood of Mouse or Bird; for being always plentifully regaled on Cream and minced Mutton, *Ben* much preferred taking Life exceedingly easy, and somewhat in Eastern fashion, on an Eider-down Cushion, by the blazing Fire, in the snug Parlour of good little *Miss Chirp*.

And now, while the Ladies above are brushing their Hair, and shaking out their Crinoline, I will introduce to your notice, the worthy and kindhearted spinster, whose turn it is this evening, to give the monthly refection of strong Bohea, and hot Muffins, to the Lady Inhabitants of the Village of Norton. *Miss Chirp* was an old Maid; the  
Queen

Queen of old Maids, I might say, and not one of the kind usually set forth to cast a shadow o'er the pages of romance. No indeed, *our* little Spinster was all sunshine. You only had to look upon her bright Face; and you loved her directly, for the kind Heart, which you were sure was beating under the prim, old-fashioned Kerchief pinned so precisely over the trim figure. You only had to look upon her Face, to wonder how it was that she was still *Miss Chirp*, and not *Mrs. Cherry* or *Mrs. Sunnyside*; and at last you came to the conclusion that it was certainly from choice and not necessity, that the sweet Face and clear silvery Laugh had settled themselves down in that snug Room with *Ben Hassan* and the yellow Canary. Pleasant little Woman! Rightly was she named *Chirp*, for her Voice in the Passage before you saw her, always prepared you for something agreeable, and was as cheerful as a Cricket on the Hearth. Her presence always set to rights what

was wrong before, and no wonder that the tripping of her Pattens (which she wore even in frosty weather) was a welcome sound at every Cottage Door in the Village.

But now they are coming down stairs, six Ladies, in six evening Dresses, six Hands are extended, and six Kisses pressed upon the Cheek of smiling little *Miss Chirp*.—First, there is a widow Lady, named *Mrs. Jackson*, and her daughter *Helen*, who is thought by her Mother to be decidedly the belle of the place. Then follows another Widow of faltering and jaded appearance, who was never known to make an original remark in her Life, and who was never seen without an everlasting piece of Knitting (a shell-pattern Quilt) in her Hand. Next came two young and lively Girls, the Daughters of our Doctor, (who rejoices in thirteen Children, and rather a declining practice). *Rose* and *Lilly Morgan* are both very round-faced, and very much alike,  
save



save that *Rose* is of course the *paler* of the two, and *Lily* has a high colour. Last and also least came *Miss Pry*, a maiden Lady of an inquisitive and vinegar aspect, the very reverse of our dear little *Chirp*. *Miss Pry's* Countenance, Hair, and Eyelashes, were all of one colour ; a dim whitey-brown, or yellow-wash, seemed to pervade her whole appearance, from the thin corkscrew Curls, to the faded lemon-coloured satin Dress, and the Margate buff Boots—Eyebrows she had none. But her Face was rendered expressive by a small pair of very quick black Eyes which saw everything at a glance, and always saw more than any body else did ; such a wonderful knowledge of looking into futurity had *Miss Pry*. A remarkable knack of saying unpleasant things had this Lady, which she called “timely advice,” “friendly warnings,” or “a painful duty.” But unfortunately, if any one felt inclined to retort upon her, or in other words “to pay

pay her back in her own coin," she became so painfully deaf, that they were called upon to condole with her upon the cold she had caught in her left Ear. She always professed the warmest admiration of *Miss Chirp*, although neither loving nor beloved by her.

On the present occasion she gave her another shower of Kisses at the Fire-place, much to the disgust of *Ben Hassan*, whom she almost dethroned, so that *Ben* set up his back, and puffed out his Comet-Tail, giving forth a sound which was certainly not friendly. It took a great deal to rouse *Ben*, but if he growled at any one, it was sure to be fussy, harsh-voiced *Miss Pry*.

"*Such* news!" exclaimed the bustling Lady, "*such* news! Who *do* you think is expected to-night, my dear, but *our new Rector*! To-night! *just fancy*! and to-morrow is Sunday! who *would* put off everything till the end of the Week! A pretty *Sermon* we shall have, I've no doubt!

How

How *can* the young Man be expected to attain anything like Christian composure, coming into the Village to-night, with the *Bells ringing* and the *Boys shouting!* a *nice* preparation for the Sabbath! What do *you* say, my dear *Mrs. Jackson?* ”

“ Indeed, my love, I scarcely know *what* to think,” said the Lady appealed to; “ dark days are in store for us, I fear.”

“ I have been down to the Rectory this morning,” continued *Miss Pry*, “ to ask for a receipt for the Rheumatism from his Housekeeper, and from all *I* can learn from her, *she* takes even a more gloomy view of the unhappy young Man than —”

“ Come to tea, Ladies, please,” interrupted *Miss Chirp*; “ the Crumpets are getting cold; and my Tea has stood *so* long — and *Dr. Morgan*, you know, says it is not wholesome to drink the over-extricated essence of the Plant; eh, *Lily*, is it not so?”

“ Papa always says, strong Tea is bad for young people,” answered the rosy Lass.

“ But,”

“But,” she added slyly to *Miss Chirp*, “I don’t believe he *thinks* so; but you know, dear *Miss Chirp*, weak Tea is certainly more economical in a family like ours.”

This was said in such a low Voice that it was wonderful how it reached the Ears of *Miss Pry* (on her deaf side too); but she quickly exclaimed—

“It is astonishing how some People will pinch and pinch in little things, and yet be positively wasteful in others! The drab Jacket which the Doctor took the other Day, to that good-for-nothing Poacher’s Son who broke his Leg, would have lasted your brother *Fred*, I should have thought, for another Winter.”

*Rose Morgan* coloured at this remark, but *Lily* laughed, and exclaimed—

“Well, *Miss Pry*, we shall never find *you* guilty of giving drab Jackets to Poachers’ Sons, or—”

Here she suddenly stopt, looking rather frightened at her remark, but the Voice  
of

of *Miss Chirp* came in to fill up the gap.

"Muffins or buttered Toast, *Miss Pry*?"

"More Cream, *Mrs. Chapman*?"

"Might I trouble you, Rose dear, to ring the Bell, and respect *Ben Hassan's* Toes, as you pass his Cushion."

"Oh dear!" began *Mrs. Jackson*, "I wonder what the *opinions* of this young Man will be!"

"Those of the 'Record,' *I trust*," said *Miss Pry*.

(*Miss Pry* never read anything *but* the "Record," and accordingly took a somewhat one-sided and prejudiced view of matters.)

"Those of the 'Guardian' or 'Union,' *I hope*," said *Rose Morgan* (who ever since her engagement to her Cousin, young *Oriel*, had diligently perused those Papers, and become much interested in Church Architecture and carved Lecterns).

"Let us hope, my dears," rejoined *Miss*  
B 3 *Chirp*,

*Chirp*, "that the young Man's views will be taken simply from the *Bible*, uncoloured by any of the Papers you have mentioned."

"And the Prayer-Book," said *Lily*.

"Of course, my dear; is not our beloved Prayer-Book the offspring of the Bible? At least I was always taught to think so; and tho' I am a simple body and don't understand Controversy, and tho' I always try to look on the bright side of things, this talk that they are making of altering the Prayer-Book, turns me cold, for if they *once* begin, where will they end? I do think," continued the old Lady, while something like a Tear stood in her bright Eye, "that it would bring my dear Father out of his Grave. You know he was once Rector of this Parish, and may *Teresa Chirp* be sleeping under the old Yew Tree by his side, before the Book which he loved next to the Bible shall be picked to pieces by Men who (however good they may be) cannot surely come up  
to

to the wise Heads and true Hearts of those who compiled it, in the Days gone by."

"Dear *Miss Chirp!*" said the quiet *Helen*, "I never saw you look so excited and severe in all my Life."

"I may have spoken hastily," said the little Woman, humbly; "but don't you agree with me, my friends?"

"Not I," answered *Miss Pry*. "I think the Church, as well as everything else, would be all the better for a Birch-broom to sweep away —"

"All the high Pews," suggested both the *Morgans*.

"The abuses which have crept in," continued *Miss Pry*, without deigning to notice the interruption; "and if this young Man preaches in his Surplice, and encourages such like mummeries, *I*, for one, shall take myself off to the next Village."

"Well, dears, we will say no more about it," said *Miss Chirp*. "I forget if my dear Father preached in his Surplice  
or

or Gown, but I shall never forget *what* he preached. Such things were not talked of then as they are now, and are beyond my poor power of comprehension; but I do sometimes wonder that so much is said about the *colour* of a garment; and, dear *Miss Pry*, do we not all hope to wear *white* Robes in the Church *above*? and, shall we ask *there* if they are the sign of a Party? I sometimes think if we made it more our business to fit ourselves for that state, we should have no spare time to argue about trifles; it may be bold for a little old Maid like me to say so though."

As the business of the Evening went on, and *Kitty* appeared, ever and anon, with a hot supply of Crumpets, and a Poppy-coloured Face, which plainly said what *she* had been doing in the lower regions; fresh little bits of scandal were announced, and swallowed, by *Miss Pry* and her particular friend, *Mrs. Jackson*, which were cleared off or smoothed over by their Hostess with  
her



her gentle Voice and merry Laugh. At length she exclaimed—

“ Bless me, *Miss Pry!* where’s *Jessie* this Evening? what has kept the sweet Child away from our social gathering?”

“ Did you speak of *Jessie Gray*, Ma’am?” replied the other; “ why really, you see, she has spent two Evenings from Home this Week, at the *Morgans’*, and her *Mind*, her *Mind* my love, must not be neglected. She is, to-night, partaking of a mental treat; being at present perusing that valuable work, ‘*The Whole Duty of Man,*’ and I propose, next Week, putting into her Hands that edifying Volume, ‘*The Duties of the Female Sex.*’ ”

“ I am sorry for it, Ma’am,” replied the other, “ at least, if it is to keep away from us our pet *Jessie*. Do allow her to devote her *Mornings* to study, and some of her Evenings to her Friends. Sweet little *Jessie!* she is such a favourite with us all.”

“ Favourite she *may* be,” replied the Lady  
with

with the sharp Face, "and it is time she learnt to try and please *me* as well as the Public. In *my* young days, *Miss Chirp*, as you ought to know (being at least three years my senior), young Ladies were not gad-about which they are now—knitting and spinning, spinning and knitting occupied their time. A walk of seven or eight miles a day gave a healthful glow to Faces, now the colour of a Bantam's Egg!"

("I wonder what she calls her own!" whispered *Rose* to *Lily*.)

"*Then* Girls never required anything more exciting to read than the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and if they wrote at all, it was only useful household Receipts in a bold round hand, which could be read: but now! oh! *Miss Chirp*! I actually feel faint at the idea! what *do* you think I found under my Niece's Desk this morning?"

"*What?* pray say!" exclaimed *Mrs. Jackson* eagerly; "a Love-letter, I'll be bound, from that young —"

"Hush!"

“Hush!” said *Miss Pry*, “nothing of that kind! *Jessie*, thanks to my pious care, has not sunk so low as *that*; but see here, Ladies! POETRY *actually*! all about yellow Leaves and broken Hearts!” and she read, in a cracky Voice—

“The autumn day is cool and calm, the sky is bright  
and clear,  
The loveliest, yet the saddest time, it seems of all the  
year;  
Because——”

But here the Bells struck up such a merry peal, that the conversation was changed in an instant to the new Rector, whose arrival they announced.



## CHAPTER II.

### FAMILY LIVINGS.

“Pronounce a text ;  
Cry—hem ; and reading what they never wrote  
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,  
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene.  
From such apostles, oh ye mitred heads,  
Preserve the church.”

COWPER'S *Task*.

AND who is the new Rector ?” my Readers will ask, “whose advent has caused such a sensation in the quiet little country Village of Norton ?” He is the *Rev. Harry Adolphus Wildman*, second Son of *Wilfred Wildman, Esq.*, in the county of——. Inheriting from his Mother good family and good looks, and from his Father a high spirit and rather a reckless disposition, *Harry* passed from Eton to Trinity with the highest approbation of those who were in his opinion the choicest lights in the School ; and with a more ardent desire to enter the  
Guards,

Guards, than to represent the ecclesiastical branch of his Family. But, as *Mrs. Wildman* remarked, "If dear *Harry* had got into rather more scrapes at Eton than some Boys, and if the sweet fellow *did* astonish his Father by frequent calls upon his Purse for College expenses, it would all come right when he was a little older, and in a few years he would make quite a pattern Priest." Besides, all the younger Branches of the *Wildman* Family were Girls, and as the eldest Son must have the Estate, it follows naturally, that the second must become Rector of a family Living, worth about a thousand pounds a year, in one of the Midland Counties, and which must in a few years' time be vacant by the death of the aged Incumbent, the *Rev. Tranquill Slowcoach*.

I must do *Harry* the justice to say that he was very much opposed to enter upon the Profession chosen for him. He knew well that he was totally unfit for

so high and holy a Calling; and many were the scenes at Home in which the wayward Boy had to listen to his Father's anger and his Mother's tearful entreaties; and it was not until the former threatened to disinherit him, that he was persuaded to comply with their wishes. *Harry* was, alas! wanting in that lofty principle and strength of character (to say nothing of higher motives) which would have made it easier for him to renounce every worldly advantage, than to stifle the voice of Conscience and forfeit his Self-respect. May the day not be far distant when *all* Church preferment shall be put into the proper Hands, viz. those of the Bishops of our Church; then we may hope that many a "good Living" will fall to the lot of hard-working and struggling Curates, instead of to unworthy Branches of worldly Families.

So in due course of Time *Harry* was ordained by the amiable Bishop of —; much to the delight of his Mother and Sisters,

Sisters, who immediately set to work to make him hem-stitched Bands, and embroidered Sermon-cases. His Grandmother, good old Lady, had begun the very day after his Christening to take down' in Short-hand almost every Sermon she heard; and as she moved to fashionable Places every Summer, and was much addicted to popular Preachers, by the Time of *Harry's* Ordination she had collected, and neatly copied out, some few hundred Discourses of every variety of opinion! These were carefully packed in a large hair Trunk, together with a Surplice of the finest Lawn, with a VANDYKED *Collar*; and twenty-seven Pots of Black Currant Jelly; for Grandmama knew her "dear Boy's Throat would soon become weak, through his untiring labours in the little Church." *Harry*, like an undutiful Grandson, left the Jelly with his Mother's Housekeeper, had the Vandyked Collar removed from the Surplice, and carefully preserved the *Sermons*, which  
were

were indeed an unexpected Blessing to him.

After residing two years in his native Village, of which his Uncle was Rector who gave him a title, the *Rev. Harry Wildman* made his debüt at Norton on the evening of the Tea-party before mentioned.

As the Population of the Village was nearly eight hundred Souls, his Family advised him to engage a strong and able-bodied Curate, to assist in the *arduous* Duties of so *heavy* a Charge. Accordingly, a College Friend of his own (and Nephew of his old Tutor, *Dr. Cram*) had arrived in the Village a week before, and taken up his abode at the *Baker's*. (The only advantage that these Lodgings possessed, being, that they were exactly opposite to *Miss Pry's* little prim green-windowed House; consequently she took quite a motherly interest in the young Curate, the *Rev. Peter Soft, B.A.*) *Mr. Soft* was a fat, pale-faced, young Man, with reddish Hair, and sleepy little



little Eyes, and a low and somewhat drawling Voice.

On Sunday, when all the Village had crowded to the Church, to see and hear the new Rector, *Mr. Soft* read Prayers. *Mr. Wildman*, who felt very nervous, and had been drinking Camphor dropped into Brandy and Water ever since seven in the morning had entered by a private Door, and had ensconced himself in the Rectory Pew (which the *Morgan* Girls had named *Mrs. Slowcoach's* "Opera Box"); and here, in the deep seclusion of moreen Curtains, he had Time to tranquillize his Thoughts, until the fat Clerk gave, or rather sang, out the last Hymn, in a Voice which made it next to impossible to understand it; but most of the Norton People could read, so what did that matter! And those who could not, and who had neither heard old *Tommy Briggs* or the late Rector for years, resigned themselves to calm meditation, or quiet slumber; and when the Service was  
over,

over, professed themselves much edified by the Discourse. However, as I have said, the last Hymn was sung, as the tall Figure of the young Rector left the snug Pew and ascended the high Pulpit. Of course, every Eye was upon him; and indeed, his was a prepossessing Countenance; his features were regular, and his bright blue Eyes and curling brown Hair formed a pleasant Picture. But an undecided expression about the Mouth gave one the idea of an unstable disposition. The Sermon which he had hurriedly selected from his Grandmother's Collection, happened to be one of *Rowland Hill's*! which being exceedingly original, and containing much racy and stirring matter, and being delivered in a loud and commanding Voice, caused the greatest sensation among the Congregation.

After Church, *Mrs. Jackson* (who had altered her opinion of the Rector, for private reasons of her own) gave out that a promising light had indeed come amongst them;

them ; and for her part, she had not heard such a Discourse since she had had the privilege of sitting under that fashionable Preacher, the *Rev. Rouser MacFluster*, in little Jerusalem Chapel. Every one was delighted with the Sermon which every one had heard, with the exception of a very priggish-looking Youth of some twelve years, who occupied a prominent place in the comfortable Gallery, belonging to the Family at the Abbey. This Gallery contained *Lady Egerton* and her little Daughter *Mabel*, a lovely child, over whose golden Head seven happy Summers had past ; the *Honourable Plantagenet Orlando Percival* (commonly called from his initials, "*Pop*"), an orphan Relative of the *Egertons*, who generally spent his Holidays with them, and whose Departure was hailed with more delight than his Arrival ;—(I am sorry to say this hopeful Sprig of Nobility amused himself during the greater part of the Service by transferring the Countenances  
of

of *Mr. Soft* and *Tommy Briggs* the fat Clerk to the Pages of his Hymn-Book;) and *Admiral Trueman*, an eccentric, but kind-hearted individual, familiarly called "*Uncle Joe*." Sweet *Lady Egerton*, of whom I shall have much to say hereafter, expressed herself agreeably surprised with *Mr. Wildman*, whose family she had known for some years; and, being a kind-hearted and charitable Woman, made up her Mind that the fast young *Harry Wildman* of other days would now settle quietly down at the peaceful Rectory.



## CHAPTER III.

HELEN.

"There's nothing in this world can bring me joy :  
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale."

KING JOHN.

"HELEN! *Helen!* leave those eternal German Books, and look up, Child! Attend to me. You know that *your* Welfare is dearer to me than Life—you know that for your Sake I have passed wretched Days and sleepless Nights—and yet——Your Hair, Child! Will you *never* have that proper respect for your personal Appearance which I require, and Society demands? (Well, that will do!) and now, what did you think of our new Rector yesterday?"

*Helen*, thus recalled from the Society of *Goethe* and *Schiller*, raised her dreamy Eyes,  
c and

and threw back the offending Hair (which certainly *was* untidy), and prepared to leave the Land of Imagination for the idle gossip of Norton Life.

“Well, Mamma, I have not yet formed an opinion of him. You know you tell me to do nothing hastily.”

“Great minds, Child, can take in character at a glance. Now *I* think——”

“But I have *not* a great mind, Mamma,” said *Helen*, with a Sigh; “if I had, I suppose I should not feel all the petty annoyances of this stupid Place. I wish——”

“*Helen!*” exclaimed her Mother, sharply, “it is time that this childish conduct should cease; it is time for you to look upon life as it really is, and not through the coloured Spectacles of your foolish fancy. If you sit for ever reading *Tasso* and *Dante* with your Hair in that state, and your Shoes down at Heel (I suppose you think *that* is like *Mrs. Hemans*—all young Ladies who wish to be thought *blue* make a point of being untidy),  
—if

—if you go on in this way, *Helen*, you will never make an advantageous marriage, which ought to be the one object of your Existence, as it is of my Wishes.”

“Mamma!” exclaimed *Helen*, now thoroughly roused, “don’t talk in that manner, pray. Oh, it is dreadful! I hate Men, I hate the Place, and you will make me hate you, if you are always harping on the same string!” she cried, impetuously.

“*Helen*, leave the Room till you can treat your Mother with proper respect,” said *Mrs. Jackson*, with dignity.

“I was wrong, Mamma. I am sorry; I will listen now,” said *Helen*, calmly. “But *do* not speak to me again in that manner, Mamma. I have made up my mind *never* to marry; there is no Man in the World I can love, and I will never marry just for a Home.”

*Mrs. Jackson* scowled at her Daughter, but her face presently relaxed into a softer expression, for, with all her faults (and they

were not a few), the Widow loved her only Child, with a deep, though ill-regulated affection, which almost amounted to Idolatry; and so, in a more gentle voice, she continued :

“ *Helen*, when I die, the Jointure which was settled on me will go to a distant Relative, and you will be left alone in this cold World. Your Talents, Child, though brilliant, will not support you, for it requires more energy than you possess to impart them to others. *Helen*, you *must* marry, and well, too! You were a Star in the London Drawing-rooms for two Years, till your foolish partiality for——”

“ Mother!” cried *Helen*, with flashing Eyes and a stamp of her Foot, “ spare me that! *His* name must not be mentioned now!”

“ Well, Child, only be my own obedient Daughter; you know I never yet failed in anything I had in hand, and I *will* be obeyed. *Helen*, I intend you to marry the *New Rector*.”

*Helen* answered not, but gazed out of the Window.



Window. The shades of Evening had fallen already over the white Pathway leading to their Cottage, and the wintry Sky looked cheerless and gloomy, save where one little Star was struggling through the clouds. *Helen* fixed her dark Eyes upon it, and wondered whether *he* looked upon her through the gathering gloom, and what *his* great and noble mind would think of the previous conversation. She was recalled by a sharp reproof for her inattention from her Mother, and the subject ended, as it always did, with passionate tears from *Helen*, and an angry speech from *Mrs. Jackson*, who considered herself the most ill-used of Mothers.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DOCTOR'S FAMILY.

"Doctor, to be with you is creditable, instructive too: but never would I loiter here by myself."—GOETHE.

"COME to Breakfast, Children," called out little *Mrs. Morgan*, on the Monday Morning following the arrival of the young Rector. "*Tom*, put away your Flute; and, *Ned*, for goodness' sake, leave off blowing that dreadful Trumpet; there is no Music in *that*, Child," she added to a fat Boy (with Cheeks always puffy, whether blowing his Trumpet or not). Indeed, all the *Morgans*, and especially the younger ones, had remarkably puffy Cheeks, and healthy rosy Faces. It was rather a wonder, too, for, as the little Woman remarked, considering how many Mouths were  
always

always open like young Blackbirds round that Table, it *was* a Marvel how they all got enough. But see, *Mary*, the eldest daughter, and the most useful of the Family, has already filled five large Plates with huge Hunches of Bread and Butter; for which praiseworthy act she is always in attendance at the Breakfast Table half an Hour before any one else. All the *Morgans* are musical; and it is a pleasant Sight to see the good-natured, white-haired *Doctor*, with his Eight eldest Children, stand up to sing a Catch or Roundelay at a Christmas Party. (It is whispered that the *Doctor's* pretty little dark-eyed Wife was once a Public Singer; but whether that be true or not, a more active, affectionate, anxious Mother was never known.) A good manager she *must* have been, or how could the young *Morgans* always appear so neatly dressed, both in public and private, call at whatever hour you like?

“Would you believe it,” said *Miss Pry*  
to

to *Mrs. Jackson* one Day—"my Laundress informs me that she washed *one hundred and ninety-six* pairs of Socks and Stockings at the *Doctor's* last week."

Kind-hearted, too, was *Mrs. Morgan*, for many a smoking Dinner found its way to a poor Neighbour's Table, carried by the chubby Hands of little *Lucy* or *Tom*.

"*Very* soft-hearted was the *Doctor*," said *Miss Pry*; "or he would send in longer Bills, and not be so imposed on by the Poor, and, in a word, become a richer Man."

But now they are gathered round the Breakfast Table, at the end of which sits *Frank*, the eldest Son. (For the *Doctor* was out nearly all Night, and has a bad Cold, and *Lucy* and *Tom* are waiting to take him up Tea and Toast.) *Frank* is the favourite of the Family, the Pet of the Village and Neighbourhood. No one has such merry Eyes and such an ever-smiling Mouth as *Frank*. No one has such kind and civil words for Rich and Poor, such an  
endless

endless quantity of Fairy Tales for his little Sisters and Riddles for his young Brothers, such thoughtful ways towards his Mother, and hopeful words for his Father, when the Christmas Bills come in fast and furious. Yet, in spite of all this, *Frank* had grievously disappointed his Father, who wished that the name of *Morgan* should become exalted through him upon the Chronicles of Surgery. Unfortunately, the young Man had no taste for his Father's profession; and though he had made up Pills, and mixed Draughts for some Years past, and had accompanied the *Doctor* in his Gig on his daily rounds, ever since he was big enough to hold the Reins, in his secret Heart, *Frank*, who was of a roving disposition, cherished his darling wish of entering the Army, and changing the monotony of Norton Life for the Perils and Adventures of distant Lands. There seemed, at last, some prospect of his wish being fulfilled, for good *Lady Egerton*, who had been a kind Friend to the *Morgans*

for many Years, had promised to use her interest with powerful Relations, to procure *Frank* a Commission; and if ever he had a good chance, it was surely now, when the best and bravest of our Land were pouring into the Crimea.

*Frank* was dwelling with delight on his future prospects, much to the distress of his Mother and the wonder of the younger Members of the Family, when the Surgery Bell was rung, and a Servant entered, to say that "*Miss Gray* had hurt her Arm, and would be glad to see *Dr. Morgan*."

"Your Father must not be disturbed, unless it is really necessary," said the careful Wife—"besides, *Jessie*, no doubt, is not much hurt; only *Miss Pry* is so very fussy. Go, *Frank*, and see what is the matter with the dear Girl, and say I will come down myself in the afternoon."

*Frank*, who had looked grave at the announcement of the Servant, was preparing to leave the Room, as his Sister was saying,  
"How

“How very unfortunate!—and *Jessie* was to be Godmother to Baby on Sunday.”

*Jessie Gray*, who, as my Readers will remember, was Niece to *Miss Pry*, and the absentee from the Evening Party, was an Orphan Girl of a remarkably sweet and sunny Disposition, who, for the last Three Years, had done her best to cheer and brighten the Pathway of that unamiable Lady. It was, indeed, a thankless task; but *Jessie* never complained, and never lost her Temper, but, like the Ivy twining round the thorny Briar, wound the Tendrils of her young warm Heart around her only near remaining Relative. When *Frank Morgan* entered the prim Drawing-room (which looked most cold and wretched when *Jessie* was *not* there); he found her on the Sofa, reading, looking rather flushed, certainly, but not as if there was much the matter with her.

“Oh, *Frank*! is it you?” she exclaimed, with a merry Laugh. “I had got up a grave Face for your Father; for, as my Aunt  
*would*

would send for him, I thought I must have something the matter with me."

"Now allow me, Madam," said *Frank*, with mock ceremony, "to examine the wounded Member. How unfortunate that I did not put Splints into my Pocket!"

"Now, you are laughing at me, which is most unfeeling," said *Jessie*, "for I have hurt my Wrist. Look here!"

"How did you manage it?" said *Frank*, taking the soft Hand in his and giving it a little squeeze.

*Frank* was a tender-hearted young Man, and would rather have seen any one suffering than his little-Playmate-that-used-to-be and Cousin, *Jessie Gray*.

"You see, *Frank*," said the young Lady, who kept laughing, and screwing up her Mouth with Pain, and laughing again, "I went this Morning to read a Letter to old blind *Richard*, from his Son in the Crimea, who is sadly wounded; and as he was down-hearted, I could not help staying to cheer him



him up ; so it got late, and I knew Aunt would be wanting her Breakfast, and I scampered down the Lane so fast, that I slipt on some Ice and fell on my Wrist, and Aunt was angry and frightened, and sent for your Father, and you are come instead, Sir ; and you must make haste and get me well, for you know I am to be Godmother to your little Sister on Sunday : so remember the Baby, *Frank*, and cure me speedily."

"The Baby will keep," said *Frank*, "and is much too solid a Piece of the *Morgan* Family for you to carry to the Font in your present dilapidated state. You are my Patient, and I must order you to keep quiet, and put your Arm into a Sling, until further notice. I will now go and prepare you a cooling Lotion, and tell your hopeful Godchild, who, I believe, is to be mine too——"

"Oh, *Frank* ! I wanted to speak to you about that very thing. When your Mother asked me to be Sponsor to her Baby, I said 'Yes,' without thinking, but since then, I have

have become quite frightened about it. You see, *Frank*, I am so *very* giddy—Aunt says I am, and I know it myself—I am always on the look out for a Joke of some sort. I *am* giddy, and I don't think anything will make me grave. Now listen—I have not done—don't you think it would be wrong of such a very thoughtless Girl as I to undertake so serious an Office? I want to ask some one about it so much, but whom can I ask? I can't go to the new Rector? *Frank*, you always gave me good Advice when I was a child, what ought I to do?"

*Frank's* merry face had changed, while *Jessie* was speaking, to a look of serious Attention, and when she ended, he answered gravely :

"All that you say, *Jessie*, is very true, yet it applies more to myself than to you. If you, who are so kind and good to every one, are unfit for the Office, what must I be, who you know am the very Spirit of Mischief and Madness? Our Dispositions, my Mother says, are both alike; our Spirits  
equally

equally gay and buoyant ; there is no crime in being happy and merry, yet it is Time, as you say, we were more thoughtful. *Jessie*, as we have had many a Frolic and mirthful Jest together, let us now help each other to be more sober and serious ; for perhaps Sorrow may be not far distant from one of us, and we can't expect to dance through Life to the tune of the *Elfin Waltz*. Let us both, after due consideration, undertake the Office you seem to shrink from, and let the little unconscious Infant be a Link between us, to remind us that, in its Name, we have again renounced the World, and should be looking after higher and better things. Now I must go ; your Aunt is coming up the Garden. Thank you, *Jessie*, for reminding me of my duty."

"Good-bye, *Frank*, I will do as you wish ; but first I will consult *Miss Chirp*, who is to be the other Godmother : she will give me good Advice, I know. I am not in much pain, tell them all. Good-bye."

CHAPTER



## CHAPTER V.

### THE ABBEY.

"The stately Halls of England, how beautiful they stand."

A LITTLE way out of the Village of Norton stands the grey old Abbey, which, with its noble avenue of Trees and clear River, winding like a silver Thread through the Park, is almost the only picturesque object of which the Village can boast. Of Norton itself I have said little, for, possessing neither the wild grandeur of a Northern District, the rich wooded Hills and shady Lanes of Kent or Surrey, the fresh verdure of Myrtle-growing Devon, or the rocky beauties of Cornwall, Norton is simply a common-place English Village, enriched, however, by a Church whose *exterior* is grand

grand and commanding, and whose elegant Spire "points up to Heaven" from amidst the fine old Yews, which, perhaps, are nearly as ancient as the Church itself.

It was soon after the opening of our Tale, on a dull lead-coloured Morning in December, that *Pop*, whose temper had been severely tried because the Water in the Park would *not* freeze, storm as he might, stood on the Terrace, watching little *Mabel Egerton* as she bounded backwards and forwards with her Hoop, followed by a silky Spaniel named "*Bonnie*." "*Danger*," a huge Newfoundland Dog, lay not far off, though *he* considered it far beneath his dignity to take any part in their Gambols, as probably also did *Pop*.

"Run a Race with me, *Pop*," said *Mabel* presently; "will you, please?"

"I never run with Girls," said the Youth, with dignity, "but I don't mind looking on, and picking you up when you tumble."

"I don't want to be picked up," replied  
*Mabel,*

*Mabel*, "but I wish you would run and catch me."

"I have a Bone in my Leg, little Woman, so don't bother me. It's awfully slow without Skating at this place," continued *Pop*, walking away.

"O here is *Uncle Joe*, dear old *Uncle Joe*!—run a race with me, will you?" exclaimed the little maiden, bounding to his side.

"A dozen, if you like, my Queen of Hearts," answered the Sea-faring Gentleman whom we have noticed at Church, catching up the breathless child, and kissing her rosy cheeks.

It was such a good-natured face (the one which was pressed to hers), that no wonder *Mabel* could extract an unlimited number of races from the legs belonging to it, although they were rather tottering, and very rheumatic. So off they set, down the Terrace and up the Avenue, until, very much out of breath, his ugly but most loveable Face gleaming round and red like a Harvest Moon,

Moon, *Uncle Joe*, with *Mabel* on his shoulder, panted into the Drawing-room, where sat *Lady Egerton*. The Abbey was *Uncle Joe's* Home, if he had one; but he still retained a Propensity to wander, and was seldom there long together. The greatest Trial to him, indeed, was to sit still for half an Hour at a time, and even in Church he was constantly on the move, walking from one end of the Gallery to the other, and looking like a caged, but very amiable Lion. It was thought that *Uncle Joe* never went to Bed, for he was heard parading the long Passages at all hours of the Night. *Pop* believed him to be pacing the Deck in imagination, from force of habit; but, in spite of a few eccentricities, and a supreme contempt for the *beau monde*, this "good old English Gentleman," a devout worshipper of *Nelson*, and the mighty Deep, was much beloved for his honest and true Heart.

"I have received a letter from my Cousin, *Lord L.*, this Morning," said *Lady Egerton*;  
"and

“and he informs me that young *Morgan* is likely to receive a Commission before long.”

“Ah!” replied *Uncle Joe*, “I am glad of it—a worthy Family that—straightforward old Man—busy little Wife—pleasant, natural Girls; and as for *Frank*, there is not a finer Fellow in the Land: the only pity is, that he did not take to the *Sea*.”

“He is coming to dine here, with two of his Sisters, to-morrow, for we must have some one to meet *Mr. Wildman*; and I have also asked *Mrs.* and *Miss Jackson*. *Helen* is so clever, that her Conversation will show our new Rector that we are not entirely without Intellect in our little Village. What a Contrast she is to her Mother!”

*Lady Egerton*, since her Husband's death (who was somewhat proud and exclusive), had made herself popular in Norton, by occasionally inviting some of its Inhabitants to the Abbey. To the *Morgans* this was quite an event; and when the evening arrived,  
and



and they entered the Drawing-room, leaning on their Brother's Arm, the calm *Rose* looked unusually excited, and *Lily's* rosy Face more pink than ever. *Mrs. Jackson* had already arrived, and young *Wildman* was doing his best to make himself agreeable to *Helen*, who was, of course, the Star of the Room. Very handsome she looked (thought everyone present) in a simple Robe of White, with scarcely any Ornament (though the old Lady had besought her, with tears, to wear her Grandmother's Jewels). The dark masses of her Hair were arranged in a careless, though classical manner, and her pale, Grecian Face was lighted up by very intelligent, soft, dark Eyes.

The Evening passed pleasantly away, enlivened by Music from the *Morgans*. *Uncle Joe*, at the request of *Mabel*, before she went to Bed, sang "Ye Mariners of England." *Helen*, too, excelled in Music, as she did in almost everything else, but no desire to shine, and scarcely to please, appeared in any thing

thing that she did; and her varied information and quiet flashes of Wit, almost unknown to herself, seemed to glide into her conversation.

*Helen* had passed some time Abroad, with a Roman Catholic Relation, who had tried to induce her to embrace that Religion; but, as she observed, "If you wish to impress any one with the fallacy of Popery, let them reside for some time upon the Continent."

*Mr. Wildman* seemed to find much pleasure in the conversation of his attractive Parishioner, for he had likewise sojourned in distant Lands, and *Helen* came to the conclusion that Evening, that he was better suited for Parisian Drawing-rooms than for a little Country Village like Norton. *Helen Jackson*, though herself leading an idle and useless life, had very correct notions as to the duties of a Parish Priest, and she managed to turn the conversation to Schools, visiting the Poor, &c. *Mr. Wildman* assured her that his valuable Curate, *Mr. Soft*, was perfect in that respect, and that he should  
leave

leave everything in his Hands, until his dull and cheerless Rectory was adorned by some fair Lady, who should pity his lonely state ; for, in his opinion, there was nothing like a Lady to set all such matters right."

*Helen* replied : " As to that, he would find the Ladies in Norton ready to attend Schools, cover Tracts, get up Bazaars, on the shortest notice ; and if there could be the slightest excuse for a *Tea-meeting*, so much the better!"

*Mrs. Jackson*, who had been listening eagerly to what had been said, now exclaimed, " You mistake, my Lovie, *Mr. Wildman* did not allude to *Ladies*, but a *Lady*, who would undertake to help him in the arduous Duties before him ; and you are *right, Mr. Wildman*," she continued ; " *no* Clergyman should be without a Wife, in *my* opinion."

The place of *Helen* (who had walked away before this Speech was concluded) was taken by *Pop*, who remarked, " The early Bird catches the Worm!" then, throwing himself on a couch in an attitude more easy than

than elegant, he asked, in a cool and self-possessed manner, "Follow the Hounds, *Wildman?*"

"Certainly," replied the Rector, "do *you?*"

"Of course," said *Pop*, in a pompous tone; "all our fellows hunt."

"On *Donkeys*, I presume!—eh! little Man?"

To this the young Gentleman vouchsafed no reply, but, stalking off with offended Dignity, muttered to himself, "What an awful *Muff!*" Nothing was so insulting to *Pop* (who had reached the august age of twelve) as to be called "little Man."

We must not forget *Mr. Soft* this evening, who is standing near *Rose Morgan*, turning over a roll of Engravings, very well got up, and with an extra supply of Macassar upon the red Locks, to deepen their colour. *Mr. Soft*, I must say, was a well-meaning little Man, kind to the Poor, and charitable towards the Failings of others; but *Mr. Soft* had one weak Point in his Character, which

which generally got him into a scrape wherever he went: *Mr. Soft* was *always* falling in Love. I regret to state that when he came to "hide his diminished Head" in Norton (under a feigned Name), there were no less than three actions for "Breach of Promise of Marriage" hanging over him. When the *Rev. Peter Soft* entered the Drawing-room this evening, bent on *conquest*, he at first selected *Helen* as the favoured Individual; but being not altogether without Tact, he soon saw that his Views would clash with his Rector's, and therefore, with the courage of a Spartan, he at once plucked the fair Image from his Heart, and resolved on the instant to devote himself to one or *both* of the *Morgans*.

All the foolish and pretty Things which he said to them you may be sure furnished plenty of Fun at the Doctor's breakfast Table next morning; and if poor *Mr. Soft* could have heard (and if *all* the *Mr. Softs* could have heard) how he was laughed at by

the young Ladies (who, like all sensible Girls, despised that contemptible Creature, a professed Flirt), he would not have felt remarkably flattered.

But the Evening is over ; the Moonlight is streaming over the old Abbey walls, where *Mabel* is dreaming of Buttercups, and *Pop* of fighting a duel with *Harry Wildman* on a Donkey, with one of "our Fellows" for second. The young Rector is looking out of his Window, although the Night is frosty, in the direction of Ivy Cottage. Yes! happy *Mrs. Jackson*! your Wishes may be crowned with success; the new Rector is in love! *Yes*, not perhaps for the first or second time, but now *really* in love, for the last time.

This may seem strange, and I cannot help thinking myself it was a hasty and premature proceeding, but so it *was*; this fast hare-um scare-um young Man was completely conquered by the calm majestic Beauty of *Helen Jackson*.

The

The Rector had long ago made up his mind to marry. His Mother wished it, so did his Sisters; his Grandmother said, such a thing was unheard of as a young Man just come into a family Living not looking about for a Wife (and Grandmamma was going to leave him all her Money, so *Harry must* please her). But *whom* should he marry? His Mother wanted Family, his Father Riches, his Grandmother Beauty, his Sisters all combined. He could not please everybody, so he had made up his mind to please himself. Whom *should* he marry? There were young Ladies in his own Neighbourhood whom *Harry* liked, but who did not like *Harry*; there were others whom he did not like who would have had no objection to becoming Lady Rectoress of Norton; but *Harry* has this Evening discovered that he not only liked, but loved (as much as he is capable of loving) *Helen Jackson*. *Helen* would do for him. Her Family on her Father's side was

good, (so *Miss Pry* had told his House-keeper, who told him,) her Beauty would grace his Home, her Talents would entertain his Friends, *herself* would visit his Schools and poor People, and take care of, and perhaps make something of, *himself* (for *Harry* had a faint idea that he was not all that a Clergyman should be, and intended to settle down and become "quite a pattern Priest," as his Mother predicted).

Then it was something so very new to handsome agreeable *Harry Wildman* to find his Attentions received with such perfect indifference, that the very Coldness of *Helen* made him more anxious to win the Jewel he saw it would be no easy matter to obtain.

So the Rector, with chattering Teeth (for the Window had been open all this time, remember), sought his Pillow. Dream on, *Harry Wildman*, dream of *Helen Jackson*, who does not care the least about you; dream on, *Helen*, dream of *Harry Wildman*,  
if



if you can. Dream on, sweet *Alice Moore*, in your far-off Home, so soon to arise like a Star in our quiet Village, dream of Heaven and your dead Mother, as you so often do. The Moonlight streams on your gentle Face, which wears a holy peace from Duties well performed and trust in a Father's love. Your Grandmother blesses you in her slumbers, and prays that the future, which lies dim before you, may be strewn with Flowers.



## CHAPTER VI.

### A CHRISTENING—A DEPARTURE.

“ Ah ! then and there was hurrying to and fro,  
And gathering tears and trembling of distress—  
And there were sudden partings.”—BYRON.

WEEK after Week passed away, and nothing very exciting took place in the Village. *Mr. Wildman* certainly did not “turn things upside down,” as *Miss Pry* had expected. No, “anything for a quiet Life” was *his* Motto, and he seemed to bid fair to tread in the respectable steps of the *Rev. Tranquil Slowcoach*, in the performance or non-performance of his duty; but, of course, *Harry* could not be expected, at his Age, to lead *quite* the life of a torpid Toad, like his venerable predecessor; so whenever there *was* a Ball, Steeplechase, or any other little diversion, he attended it with pleasure.

A few

A few of the Inhabitants of the Village, who had hoped for better Things, were disappointed; but most of the Nortonsians, I am sorry to say, cared very little about their Clergyman, provided he preached short Sermons. The poor People, having been unaccustomed for Years to be visited by their Rector, could not miss his Visits, and, indeed, they were looked after by *Miss Chirp*, *Jessie Grey*, and a few more Ladies, and their wants kindly supplied by *Lady Egerton*, whose feeble Health would not allow her to minister to them in person. *Mrs. Jackson* also, and *Miss Pry*, I must not forget to say, were very attentive in their calls upon their poor Neighbours; but as their visits were generally made at meal times, and they never gave anything away but *good advice*, their appearance was not hailed with any particular delight.

*Jessie's* Arm had got quite well, and *Jessie's* voice might be heard all over the House, singing like a Skylark. To look at her bright Face, and to hear her irresistible  
Laugh,

Laugh, you would not suppose her guilty of writing about "yellow Leaves." I cannot describe *Jessie's* face; she was not the least pretty, but she could not be called plain, with those sparkling Eyes, chestnut Hair, and that kindly expression, peculiar only to unselfish dispositions. Hers was the sort of Face that a Child would trust in directly, or that would lead a wayfaring Man to ask his road of her, quite sure of receiving a pleasant answer. If *Miss Chirp* was a sunbeam, *Jessie* was a whole flood of Sunshine, gilding and brightening everything within its reach. Without *her*, *Miss Pry's* exceedingly prim Sitting-room looked as if it could only be inhabited by Ghosts. The moment *Jessie* entered, the scattering of Music near the Piano, of Books or Work upon the cold bare Table, a more graceful fold to the short-waisted Curtains, all given by her magic touch, quite changed the character of the Apartment. Neat-handed, light-hearted *Jessie!* yet there are sorrowful days in store for you.

The

The christening of *Mrs. Morgan's* fat Baby had been put off, but next Sunday it was to take place. *Miss Chirp* had had many conversations with *Jessie* on the subject, and she and her Cousin were looking forward to it with serious pleasure. *Mr. Soft* was to perform the Ceremony *after* the Sermon (for the Inhabitants of Norton had not yet learned to regard that beautiful Service with a sufficient degree of interest to lead them to take part in it). All the Parties interested in the little white-robed Being, lying in *Jessie's* Arms, would certainly have been better pleased if *Mr. Soft's* manner of performing the Service had been more impressive. That Rev. Gentleman had been accustomed to baptize some dozen Infants at a time, in a large manufacturing Town, on which occasions he never took them in his Arms (for fear of dropping them—he had such a nervous horror of Babies), but contented himself with crossing them off (like so many Buns) as they lay

in the Arms of their Sponsors. So little *Jessie* was taken up to the *Altar Rails* (the old stone Font which used to stand at the Church Door being now in the Rectory Garden, filled with Fuchsias and Geraniums), and christened from a little China Bowl, which was kept under the Communion Table. (*Miss Pry* said she remembered that it had once been *Mrs. Slowcoach's* Sugar-basin.)

However, the Baby is christened, and did not cry the least, *Mr. Soft* was so merciful to her feelings in sparing the Water. She is taken Home to be kissed by her little Brothers and Sisters, while the rest of the Party are walking through the Fields, to the Doctor's House. *Frank* and *Jessie* are the last.

*Frank* had, that very Morning, had his wish granted, having received the long wished-for Commission in the — Regiment, under orders to depart in a short time to the Crimea. He had said nothing about it

it yet, wishing that this Sunday, and the Day of his little Sister's christening, should pass without the knowledge of that which would throw a gloom over the happy Party. *Frank's* Heart was very full of pride, and pleasure, and sadness—pride and pleasure that he was now called upon to serve his Country in her hour of need, mingled with bright Hopes of Fame to be won, and Laurels earned, upon that far-off Shore. Sadness at the thoughts of parting for the first time in his Life from the familiar Scenes around him, and from those most dear to his Heart, and especially a very aching pain in that Region, when he thought that it might be long indeed before he wandered again with his young Cousin over those well-known Fields.

*Frank* had loved *Jessie* like a Brother since the days when they had gone to School together, to an old French Lady, then in the Village. *Frank* had lifted *Jessie* so carefully over the Mud, and taken her part so bravely in

in any little childish dispute, that *Jessie* had looked up to him as to quite a superior Being. Now that he was about to leave her, *Frank* had discovered that he loved *Jessie* more than a Brother, and he wished to tell her so—"but wait a little, *Frank*; you have nothing to keep a Wife on yet, you know, and why make that bright young Spirit anxious and unhappy? Yet stay, *Frank*, you may never return from that Shore which has proved a Grave to so many of your brave Countrymen, and you may be sure that rosy Face would then grow pale. But *Miss Pry*! what would she say! Oh, *Frank*, you must wait." So here they are, at the Doctor's Door! and neither *Frank* nor *Jessie* have exchanged a single Word, and *Mrs. Morgan* declares that the two most lively and amusing People in the Village have become the most sedate.

A few Weeks more, and the noble Fleet, which had been lying so long at Spithead, had sailed away with its Cargo of brave Hearts to that Land where so many bright  
Hopes



Hopes lie buried. Who does not remember how different to the first was the second departure of that gallant company of Vessels? Who does not remember the gloom which hung like a sable Garment over many an English Home when the white Sails were lost to sight?

Of *Frank's* leave-taking little need be said—of the grief-stricken, yet proud old Father, the weeping Mother and Sisters, the half-frightened groups of Children clinging to their favourite for the last time—" 'tis an old Tale," and was "told" over, how very often, about that Period.

*Frank* had gone to bid *Jessie* "Good-bye" the Day before—*Miss Pry* was in the Room. *Jessie* was writing a Letter for old blind *Richard*, to his Son (who, strange to say, belonged to the same Regiment as *Frank's* Dépôt). *Miss Pry* talked of the Weather, and the Influenza, and of Fevers and Ague he would be sure to catch in the Crimea—hoped he would be a good Boy, and write home

home constantly to his Mother, and not forget his Friends and Relations, as *most* young Men did when they went abroad. *Frank* heard it all quietly, and then got up to take leave.

*Jessie*, who wanted to say a great deal, was suddenly seized with a sort of cramp in the Throat; *Frank*, who, perhaps, *would* have said a great deal if *Miss Pry* had not been present, could only press the little Hand, and say, "You won't forget me, *Jessie*?" and then make such a hasty exit, that he threw down a few light Cane Chairs, upon which *Miss Pry* remarked, that she trusted "If that young Man ever *did* return (which was exceedingly doubtful, considering how many had died already out there), he would be a little more polished in Manners, and not such a great tall Hobby-de-hoy as he was at present!"



## CHAPTER VII.

HOW POP TOOK IN MISS PRY, AND HOW MRS. JACKSON  
TAKES IN MR. HARRY WILDMAN.

“Will you walk into my parlour?  
Said the Spider to the Fly.”

CHRISTMAS came; and, as usual, *Jessie Grey* and the *Morgans* decorated the Church. Not so merrily as in days gone by, however, did they cut Evergreens in the Garden, and twine Wreaths in the Porch. *Frank* was wanted to reach the high branches, *Frank* was wanted to fasten the Festoons over the Arches, *Frank* was wanted everywhere, and by every one; but *Frank* was far away.

*Jessie* was as thoughtful and kind to others as before; but *Jessie* did not sing about the House quite so gaily. Even *Miss Pry* remarked that to *Mrs. Jackson*, and hoped that  
her

her niece had not lost her heart to *Mr. Soft*, who had made a great many calls lately; and either herself or *Jessie* must be the attraction, thought that Lady. And here I may as well mention, that *Mr. Soft*, finding the *Miss Morgans* so very inapproachable (as he termed it), was rapidly transferring his affections to *Jessie Grey*, whose blithe smile, and pretty household ways, had quite captivated his fancy. Accordingly, he took to writing Sonnets, composed a "Jessie Polka" (*Mr. Soft* was musical), and called frequently on her pet, old blind *Richard*.

*Pop* had returned to School, or rather to the Gentleman who received half-a-dozen aristocratic Youths, at £500 per annum. His departure caused a delightful calm at the Abbey, and *Miss Pry's* cats were left in peace. It was not *Pop's* intention, however, to leave that worthy Lady herself in tranquillity; for, on the 14th of February, she received a pink-edged Envelope, closed with a wafer, bearing the inscription, "Will you  
be

be mine?" On opening it, *Miss Pry* read the following lines, addressing her by her Christian name:—

"Oh, *Angelina*! ever dear,  
My charmer, turn and see  
Thine own devoted *Peter* here,  
Waiting a smile from thee.  
Thy maiden name will soon be doft,  
If thou wilt list to *Peter Soft*."

The visits were now explained then; and this was a declaration of love, in *Mr. Soft's* own handwriting (for she had seen it at the post-office). *Pop*, amongst other accomplishments, could forge handwriting quite well enough to deceive *Miss Pry*. It certainly showed the poor young Man was possessed of good Taste, as well as sound Judgment, to prefer *her* to a giddy young Girl; but, alas! she must disappoint him. She had made up her mind not to enter into the married state. The blow must be struck, and she must refuse him as kindly as possible! So the worthy Lady, quite in a youthful flutter of excitement, sat down and wrote, in  
a thin

a thin neat hand, a very feeling Letter, declining the honour proposed to her. Fancy the astonishment of her opposite Neighbour on receiving the interesting *Billet-doux*! Whether he fancied her intellect was leaving her, or that the lively *Jessie* had had a hand in it, I cannot say; but, from thenceforth, his visits at Periwinkle Lodge became "few and far between."

Spring passed swiftly away; and the monthly Tea-meetings were held as usual in the Village, with the addition now of the young Rector and his Curate, who had petitioned to be allowed to present their white ties among the flowing Drapery of the Ladies. Both pleaded that they attended to receive good advice from those who had so long resided in the Parish.

The days became longer and longer, and the Common beyond Norton, so bleak and dreary in Winter, was now gay with many coloured Flowers. Very often was *Mabel*, with her Nurse, to be seen in the green Meadows;

Meadows; and many a Wreath of Eglantine did her little Fingers weave to adorn the rough Neck of *Danger* or *Bounce*, her constant Companions.

Very often, too, was *Mr. Harry Wildman* to be found in the pretty Drawing-room at Ivy Cottage. *Mrs. Jackson* always had so many Pens for him to mend, and other little services for him to render, that it really seemed uncivil in him to stay away.

*Helen*, however, as yet gave him no encouragement—indeed, she was generally perfectly silent, or intensely occupied with a German or Italian Translation; and the conversation was usually carried on between the Rector and her Mother. Had the young Lady not been so very much taken up with her Books, at the other end of the Room, she would have heard her own Talents and Accomplishments eulogized very highly by her affectionate Parent; and might have noticed likewise a very amused smile on the face of her Admirer. *Harry's* thoughts were perhaps

perhaps something to this effect: "The Daughter is adorable, but what *can* a Man do with the old Mother-in-law."

At length, to the surprise of all the Village, it was announced by *Miss Pry*, one fine Day in the Month of May, that the *Rev. Harry Wildman* was really engaged to the lovely *Helen*. Of course it had been imparted in the *strictest confidence* to that Lady, by the happy Mother (who knew that to tell her a *secret* was the best and most speedy way of proclaiming it far and near). So the Village talked and wondered for some weeks; and as to *Miss Pry*, good soul! *Jessie* thought the *Jacksons* ought to provide her with a pair of new Shoes, in return for those which she wore out trotting about from House to House with the tidings. The young People themselves, who were the cause of so much speculation, seemed to take it very calmly. *Miss Jackson* was still completely engrossed with her Books, and her face wore the same hopeless and resigned expression: but *Miss Pry*



*Pry* remarked that she was paler, and *Jessie* noticed a look of determination which had never before been visible on her listless countenance. How many Tears and Struggles it had cost *Helen* to comply with her Mother's wishes, no one ever knew. She was a sealed Volume to all inquirers, and even *Miss Chirp*, kind and sympathizing as she was, could offer her neither advice nor consolation. And so it was settled that, in October, our Rector should lead to the Altar the lovely and accomplished *Helen*.



## CHAPTER VIII.

ALICE.

"A perfect woman, nobly planned.  
To warn, to comfort, and command."

WORDSWORTH.

IT was almost over. The warm Light from the setting Sun, which streamed in at the little Window, fell upon the Face of the Dying Woman, and told *Alice* that ere that Sun had risen again the beloved Sufferer would be at rest. The soft Eyes of the young Girl closed wearily beneath the long Lashes; no Tear escaped them, but one deep Sigh spoke plainly of an aching heart, as though it longed to be at peace for ever with her aged Grandmother.

For long, long Hours, through warm Summer Days and calm Summer Nights, had *Alice* watched beside that Bed, sometimes supporting

supporting the aged Head, and resting her cool Hand on the burning Forehead, sometimes with low, soothing Voice, reading sweet words from the Holy Bible, or kneeling beside the Couch, to sing the Evening Hymn to the Ear which had listened to it from her Childhood. And now her labours of Love were almost over—labours of Love indeed had they been—which *Alice* delighted to perform. What though want of rest and proper exercise had taken the bloom from her Cheek, and soon made heavy her once light step? small seemed *her* services compared with the Love and Care of that only Parent, who had watched over her early Years with all the solicitude of a Mother. *Alice* gazed upon the pale Face, as though she would imprint the well-known Features upon her Heart, before Death should rob her of her Treasure.

The Sun sank lower and lower, yet still no change took place in the Invalid. The Voices of the Village Children came in through

through the open Window, mingled with the Fragrance of Roses and Honeysuckles from the trim little Garden below. Did *Alice* think, on that calm May evening, how soon she must change those familiar Voices for those of Strangers? and the Home of her happy youth for a lonely lodging in a crowded City? Perhaps such thoughts might have accompanied that last watch, but if so, they seemed very trifling compared with the heavier Trial she was teaching herself to look forward to. Suddenly the dying Face lighted up, and the feeble Hands seemed to be feeling for those of her Child. *Alice* bent down to receive what she knew would be her last Blessing. The dim Eyes opened, and the sufferer whispered, with a trembling Voice, "God bless my Child! Forsake not Him, *Alice*, though your path may be a Thorny one! Farewell, poor Orphan! the Father of the Fatherless be your Friend for ever!"

The young Girl closed the Eyes with a loving Hand, and then sinking down beside the

the still, pale form, for the first time in her Life, realized that she was *alone*—alone, as regarded Earthly Friends—yet *not* alone, for in that silent Room she seemed to hear the Wings of Angels bearing the ransomed Spirit to its Home,—she seemed still to listen to the Voice which had committed her to the care of an All-powerful Guardian; and so, with a Prayer to the God of the Fatherless, overcome with Weariness and Sorrow, she sank into a peaceful and childlike Sleep.

Soon after this, the Door was gently opened by her faithful old Nurse, an Irishwoman, named *Bridget O'Connor*, who, seeing that her Mistress no longer needed her Care, and that her darling *Miss Alice* lay almost Lifeless on the Ground, took her light form tenderly in her Arms, and bore it to her own Bed; then, having called a Neighbour in to watch in the Chamber of Death, she sat down to weep and wring her Hands, yet very quietly, for fear of awakening the deep slumbers of “her Child.” Could *Alice* have heard some  
E of

of the muttered Sentences which fell from the Lips of the faithful *Bridget*, she would no longer have doubted that she still possessed one humble, true-hearted friend.

“And has it come to *this*, Mavourneen?” said the weeping Nurse; “that me Jewellies here with scarce a Dhroop of Blud in her veins! My Lily! that was too tender for the Summer Wind, bow’d down entirely! Agra! Oh! thin, was it for *this*, Darlint, that I nursed and tended ye, when ye was a Slip o’ a thing, that ye might shoot up the fairest of them all! Oh! thin, to see ye as White as the blessed Corpse in the Room there! My Colleen! my Pride! and is there no Smile on yer Face, at all, at all! Och! Mavourneen! Mavourneen! and will ye go out alone into the cold World, that’s all too big for the likes of you to battle with! Och! that *Bridget O’Connor* should have lived to see the Day! How light she’s got! and it’s her little Hand ye might see through, I’m thinking. The pure Crather, there’s nothing  
left

left of her but her Eyes, and they're big and bright enough for two. May be, could she cry a little, it's aisier that the pure young Heart would be!"

A few Weeks passed, and *Alice Moore* had left the fair Home of her Childhood, in that lovely Kentish Village, to enter upon a Situation as Governess, in a large manufacturing Town in the North of England.

The faithful *Bridget*, through the kindness of their Clergyman, had been placed comfortably in an Almshouse; and with many Tears and Lamentations saw her young Mistress depart, to live amongst those who, to use her own expression, were not "fit to hold a Candle to her Darlint."

A Lady by Birth and Education, in feeling and refinement, young and unused to the World, it was with a heavy Heart that our Heroine found herself, a Stranger amongst Strangers, about to enter upon a new sphere of Duty; but it *was* Duty, and *Alice* was not the one to shrink from it: and though often

in her lonely Hours she looked back to the happiness of her early Years, it might be with regret, but it was never with repining.

It is not our intention to follow the friendless Governess through her first experiences of the Life so new to her. In a short space of Time she had met with a variety of Adventures, and acquired a deeper insight into Human Nature. She had met with kindness where she least expected it, and unkindness from those whose position she fancied should have taught them better—with whom *Poverty* was a Crime—and “the Governess” was treated with less consideration than the Servants. With such as these we shall have little to do, nor would we disgrace the Pages of our Story with their heartless Characters. However, “*Miss Moore*” passed through many little trials and annoyances with the calm and sweet tempered Dignity which was habitual to her, and being of a hopeful and sunny Disposition



position was able to find Happiness without, when it was denied to her within, the Homes of her Employers.

*Alice* was passionately fond of Scenery, and sketched beautifully from Nature. She was a fine Painter—many a rocky Coast and stormy Sea, many a grey Ruin, with a Stream of Sunlight gilding the Trees beyond it, obeyed her magic Touch on the Canvas. As for Flowers, and Music, and Poetry, they were a part of herself; and *Alice* never thought of being dull or unhappy while so many of God's good and beautiful Gifts lay within her reach; for, as she said, "Who could rob her of the Sunshine, or blot out the bright Stars, that smiled down upon her like constant Friends?" Yet joyful for her was the Day when her Eye fell upon the following Advertisement: "Wanted, in a quiet Family in the Country, a Lady to take charge of the Education of a little Girl of seven Years," &c.—and so it came to pass, that the "quiet Family in the Country" were the Inhabitants  
of

of the Abbey, and thus *Alice Moore* came to sojourn in our Village of Norton. The Carriage which had been sent to fetch her rolled slowly up the wide Avenue, *Bounce* and *Danger* barked as it stopped at the old Gateway, but never after that at *Alice*, for all Animals loved her. Rather frightened she looked as she stood in the large Drawing-room (where *Uncle Joe* was pacing up and down, and *Pop* standing before the Fire-place with imaginary Coat-tails over his Arms), but kind *Lady Egerton* came forward directly, and looking in her Face, *Alice* saw in a moment that she had found a Friend. What was it that brought Tears into the Eyes of her Hostess, as she gazed on the lovely Features of the new Governess? Her deep mourning Dress, perhaps—but why did she start, and draw her nearer to the Light? Then remembering herself, she said, “Excuse me, *Miss Moore*, you must be wearied with your Journey,” and led her away.

But first they must take a peep into the  
Nursery

Nursery, where little *Mabel* is asleep. The Window Curtains are drawn back, for Nurse says "the Darling always likes the Moonbeams to play on her Face," and there she lies—this new Charge for *Alice*—a perfect Picture of childish Beauty. What soft rosy Cheeks and fat dimpled Hands! what a nice Mouth, half-open, disclosing the pearly Teeth! what a quantity of golden Hair, and long Eyelashes, which you are sure must hide laughing blue Eyes! *Alice* stands over her, and presently exclaims, "How very lovely! O how I shall love her!" *Lady Egerton* smiles, well pleased at this natural heartfelt Admiration, and answers, "Yes, my little *Mabel* is loved by every one, and will return your Affection warmly, and that will not be a difficult matter, I fancy, my young Friend," regarding her again with another look of intense Interest.

Here we leave *Alice* for awhile, an Inmate of the grey Abbey, feeling somehow more at Home than she has done since her Grandmother's

mother's Death. She is very tired, and soon falls asleep, and the tall Figure of *Lady Egerton* glides gracefully about in her Dreams, mingling with the Form of her Dead Mother.



## CHAPTER IX.

DAME HAGGINS.

“Meanwhile her poor hut sunk to decay, and so she lived through the long winter reckless and alone.”—WORDSWORTH.

ONE lovely Day towards the end of September, when *Alice* had been a few Weeks at the Abbey, she and *Mabel* set out to take a long walk, and, beguiled by the beauty of the Day, they wandered out, far beyond the breezy Common. Very firm and loving friends had the Governess and her little Charge become even in this short time, and now the prattling Child, looking up at the sweet Face above her, exclaimed :

“What do you think *Uncle Joe* said this Morning? that we were as like each other as two trim little sailing Vessels. Wasn’t that odd ! But if I *am* like you, I must be

very pretty. I love you so much, that I am glad you *are* beautiful; I like everything to be pretty; isn't Mamma lovely? O, she is like a grand stately Queen! and you are like the bright good Fairy in my story. I like Flowers because they are beautiful; I love my Birds because they have gay Feathers. I love *everything*, *Bounce* and *Danger* (though *Danger* is not pretty), and *Uncle Joe*, so very, very much. Do you think my *Uncle Joe* pretty, *Miss Moore*?"

*Alice*, smiling at this question, replied, if *Uncle Joe* was not handsome, he was kind and good, and *that* was much better. Then, after telling the eager Child some of the Tales of which she had an inexhaustible supply, she sat down to rest, while the unwearied little Girl set off in search of wild Flowers, followed by both the Dogs.

She had not reclined many minutes against an old Tree, when she was accosted in rather an unpleasant manner by a tall rough-looking Man, who informed her that he was out of  
Work,

Work, and must have Money to buy food with. *Alice* replied gently that she was sorry she had left her Purse at Home; and rising called *Bounce* and *Danger* to her Side, who evidently were anything but pleased with her Companion, and barked so loud that they were soon joined by *Mabel*.

The Man, seeing the young Lady he had supposed to be alone thus guarded, walked away with rapid strides, and was soon out of sight.

“Come, dear,” said *Alice*, “we will return Home; the Sun is gone in, and the Sky is getting very black; I fear we shall have a Storm;” but *Mabel* clung to her, sobbing and affrighted, and whispered, “Oh, *Miss Moore*, that was ‘*Black Ben*!’”

“And who is ‘*Black Ben*,’ darling? but whoever he was, he is gone now, and we are quite safe with our good Dogs, little *Mabel*.”

“‘*Black Ben*’ is a wicked Man,” answered the Child, “a great black ugly Poacher; Nurse said he was in Prison, and I shall  
never

never come on the Common again, now that he is come out."

While she was speaking, large Drops of Rain began to fall, and a loud Burst of Thunder told them the Storm was at hand. "I am not afraid of *that*," said little *Mabel*; "God makes it thunder; but I don't like *Black Ben* at all."

By this time, they were very near a solitary looking Cottage, the only one to be seen on the Common, and *Alice*, knowing *Lady Egerton* would be uneasy if *Mabel* should get wet, as she was a delicate Child, hastened up to the low Door of the wretched Hut, and knocked for Admission. Some little Time elapsed, and then an old Woman looked out of the Window, a Dog barked loud and sharp, and, after a great deal of unbarring and unbolting, the Door was half opened by the Dame, who, first muttering and mumbling to herself, asked "what they might please to want of a lone Body, who hadn't a Friend in the World, or a Halfpenny either?" *Alice* replied,



replied, that "they came from the Abbey, and having been overtaken by a Storm had sought Shelter at her Cottage."

Very reluctantly the old Woman led them into the cold and cheerless Room within, which only contained a Table with broken Legs, two Chairs, a Stool, and two large and lean black Cats.

"You'd best keep out yer *Dogs*," said the Hag, "or *Spitfire* and *Scratch* won't leave an eye in their Heads."

*Alice* was almost inclined to wish they had kept out themselves, when she looked at the wicked old Face peering down upon her, with its sharp little grey Eyes, which seemed trying to read her like a Book. However, not to appear discomposed, she remarked quietly, that the situation of her Cottage was rather lonely, and asked in a cheerful Tone what her Name was? and if "she was known to *Lady Egerton*, whose kindness to the Poor of Norton was great." The Crone answered, that her Name was *Haggins*, "*Dame Haggins* she

she was called; some said she was a Witch, and that was all the better for her, as it kept People off. She didn't know nothing of Norton Folks, and *Lady Egerton* wasn't nothing to her; she was a poor, lone Woman, in a lone Cottage, her Son was at Sea, and she hadn't a Halfpenny in the World."

Here a dark Shadow passed the Window, and *Dame Haggins* went hastily out of the Door, as the Dogs barked loudly.

*Alice* sat still, and talked to *Mabel*, and did not know that *Black Ben*, the Son of the old Woman, had just returned. On entering the Room soon after, as *Alice* was drying the wet Plumes of *Mabel's* Hat, *Dame Haggins* fixed her piercing Eyes upon her Wrist, and then said in a low Voice—

"Maybe, my pretty Miss, you've hurt your Arm, since you've lived up thereat the Abbey?"

"No," replied *Alice*, innocently, "that Burn I received when I was an Infant, I believe."

The old Woman continued to gaze at the  
rather

rather peculiar Scar, and then at the Face of the young Girl for some Minutes, then she sat down, and appeared lost in Thought. "Folks call me a *Witch*," said she suddenly, "and perhaps I *do* know more than some. Cross my Hand with a bit of *Gold*, young Lady, and I will tell you something worth hearing, which *you* never know'd before, I reckon."

*Mabel* looked frightened, and *Alice* did not feel altogether comfortable, when the Child, squeezing her Hand, whispered, "I have Half-a-Crown that *Uncle Joe* gave me this Morning. Give her that, and let us come away. Mamma says it is wicked to tell Fortunes. Take me Home, do please, *Miss Moore*."

*Alice* held out the Silver, saying, "I have no Gold, and no more Money with me; the Rain has ceased, and we will now return, and thank you for taking us in."

*Dame Haggins* took the Money with sparkling Eyes, and continued, "Well, good Day then; you have no Gold, and it's *only* for *Gold*  
I would

I would tell my Secret. Perhaps some Day you'll look in again; but mind and bring the *Gold*, for I'm a lone Body, and haven't a Halfpenny in the World." So saying, the old Woman let them out more quickly than she admitted them, and *Alice*, breathing freely in the open Air, tried to amuse *Mabel* with other Subjects, until they reached Home.

When this Adventure was related to *Lady Egerton*, she informed *Alice* that *Dame Haggins*, whose Hospitality they had shared, had for many Years borne an indifferent Character; that she was reputed to be a Miser, and very unscrupulous as to the Way in which she obtained Money.

Her hopeful Son *Benjamin*, or "*Black Ben*," as he was called in the Village, had a few Years ago returned from a long Transportation, and was now a notorious Poacher, and spent most of his Time in Prison, or, as his Mother termed it, "at Sea," which was invariably her Cause of his Banishment.

*Lady Egerton* added, that she had been obliged

obliged to reprove her little Maid *Margaret Priggins*, that very morning, for going to have her Fortune told by the worthless old Woman.

And now, before I close my Chapter, I will say a word respecting *Margaret*, or *Peg Priggins*, as she called herself; for she was quite a character, and a very strange one too. The History of this young Damsel was as follows :—

Some Years ago, a Party of strolling Players passed through the Village, having with them a little Girl, ten Years old. Passing over the Common, on a dark Winter Night, the poor Child was supposed to have fallen down in the Snow, and thus been left behind. She was found early next Morning by *Lady Egerton's* Gamekeeper, almost frozen to Death; and that charitable Woman received her at the Abbey, and had her taken care of until her recovery. Then, as no one came to claim her, she was sent to the Village School for five Years, and at the Age of  
fifteen

fifteen was placed under *Mrs. Crummie, Lady Egerton's* good-natured Housekeeper.

*Peg* was exceedingly quick, active, and clever, but, sad to relate, the training of her early Years was not forgotten, or superseded by the good which should have taken its place. Her kind Mistress saw with regret, that in spite of all her care, *Margaret's* disposition was deceitful in the extreme. *Peg* scarcely ever spoke the Truth—even when she had no Purpose to gain by falsehood. Often had *Lady Egerton* warned her of the Sin of lying, and said that she feared she could no longer keep her in her Service; then *Peg* would cry, and say she had always been brought up to it, for her Parents taught her to steal and lie as soon as she could speak; and soft-hearted *Lady Egerton* would give her another trial, upon *Peg's* promise of amendment, though *Uncle Joe* would shake his Head, and tell his Niece she would never make anything of such a “Madge Wildfire.”

*Alice*

*Alice* had frequently noticed this little Maid of small Stature, and sharp peculiar features, of some sixteen or seventeen Years, popping up at every Corner of the House, and disappearing as nimbly as a Monkey. She had been both amused and vexed to find her one morning in her own Room, standing before the Looking-glass in her Hat and Cloak, but before she had time to speak to her, *Peg* had dropped a little courtesy, and had disappeared through another Door.



## CHAPTER X.

A PARTY AT THE ABBEY.

“What shall I do?”—HAMLET.

“MY Rooms are so exceedingly *small*, dear *Lady Egerton*,” said *Mrs. Jackson*, calling one Morning at the Abbey, “that I really feel quite Nervous as to how the Breakfast will go off! There will be so many of *our* Friends, and such a Host of *Wildmans*! I feel confident that the Excitement of parting with an only Child, added to the stupidity of Waiters, and the breakage of Crockery (which always shakes my Nerves), will bring on an attack of Heart-disease, to which I have long been subject.”

“I trust not,” said *Lady Egerton*, scarcely able to repress a smile. “When is the happy Event to take place?”

“In



“In a few Weeks, I fear,” answered the loquacious Lady, in a melancholy Voice. “No one knows what it has cost me to make up my Mind to part from my sweet Child—in fact, I put my *veto* upon it from the first. My Spirits gave way whenever the young Man entered the House; but when I saw that *Helen’s* Happiness was at stake, what could I do but make up my Mind to resign her? though I tell you candidly, *Lady Egerton*, it is a Blow which I shall *never* recover.”

Here the poor Mother became so deeply affected that her Handkerchief was soon drenched with her Tears; and simple-minded *Lady Egerton*, who thought that *Helen* was really about to Marry against her Mother’s wishes, felt for her exceedingly.

“*You* will know one of these Days, what I suffer now,” continued *Mrs. Jackson*; “when your angelic little Daughter is grown up; but what weighs so much on my Mind at present, *Lady Egerton*, is the size of my Rooms, about which I came to ask your advice. Do you think

think it would be a *very* unheard-of proceeding on my part, if the Wedding Breakfast should be held in the *School-room* just over the way? I feel that I am not equal to entertaining so large a Party in my Cottage, and neither *Miss Pry* nor *Miss Chirp* (who would gladly offer me the use of their Rooms) have more accommodation than myself."

What could *Lady Egerton* say to this, which even *she*, good Creature, saw was a plain and undisguised Hint to be asked to the Abbey? *Helen* had long been a Favourite of hers, and she felt for the poor Mother so soon to be bereaved of her Child; and so, like an amiable Woman as she was, she replied, that it would give her great Pleasure to throw open her Rooms on the occasion of her young Friend's Marriage; and as *Mr. Wildman's* Parents were well known to her, she trusted the Arrangement would give satisfaction to all Parties.

*Mrs. Jackson* professed herself much astonished and completely *overwhelmed* by this Offer, hoped *Lady Egerton* would believe that

that such an Idea had never entered her Head, but as she (*Lady E.*) *had* so generously made it, she would thankfully accept it; and she left the Abbey, in another shower of Tears, congratulating herself warmly upon her Skill in gaining the Object she had called to attain.

“Who *were* those *flaunting Peacocks* in the Gallery on Sunday?” asked *Miss Pry*, the following Week (at a little Tea-drinking given by *Mrs. Jackson*, to display some of her Daughter’s Wedding Presents).

“Don’t you know, my Dear?” answered the Lady addressed. “They are the *Countess of Courtland* and her Daughters, *Lady Constance* and *Lady Blanche* (first Cousins of poor *Sir Francis Trevellian*), now on a Visit to the Abbey. Are you not invited to spend the Evening with those distinguished Guests on Thursday?”

“I have certainly received an *Invitation*,” said *Miss Pry*, “but whether I go is another Thing. I have given up worldly Vanities  
long

long ago, and I don't think I could sit comfortably in a Room with such overdressed young Women as these fine London Misses. I do believe their Bonnets (which I examined narrowly) were no larger than this Teacup, and appeared to be made of a texture no thicker than the Wings of a Dragon-fly: and this is the beginning of October!"

*Rose* and *Lily Morgan* smiled at the idea of such scruples keeping away *Miss Pry*, of all People, from an Evening party at the Abbey, which was quite an event in her Life.

*Miss Chirp* was sitting in a corner trying to talk cheerfully to *Helen*, who looked more unapproachable and rather more sad than ever. *Jessie* was listening to *Mary Morgan's* account of *Frank's* last Letter, and she told how they were all engaged, down to little *Lucy*, in knitting warm Gloves for the poor Soldiers; and then *Jessie* whispered, that her Aunt would give her nothing for the purpose of procuring Wool, &c. (as she considered *War* a most unchristian profession), but that she

she (*Jessie*) would be delighted to give her Time; and a little plan was made for rising at six, to work hard for the poor fellows in the Crimea;—"for oh, *Mary*," said *Jessie*, "how can we ever do enough for those noble Men!"

"What a remarkably sweet young Person *Miss Moore* is!" said *Miss Chirp*, presently. "I have seen her at several Cottages lately, and she has won the Hearts of all, old *Richard* among the number. What do you say to that, *Jessie*?"

"I am glad that she does visit my old blind Pet," answered *Jessie*; "but no one is to read his Son's Letters to him but *me*. No fear, however, of my being jealous of that pretty Governess; I have met her there, too, and we are Friends already. You know, dear *Miss Chirp*, she is an Orphan like myself, and that alone would make *me* like her. I am so glad she is come to the Abbey, where *Lady Egerton*, I am sure, treats her more like a Daughter than a Governess."

“A sure way of *setting her up*,” remarked *Miss Pry*. “What does this young Woman take upon herself to visit the Cottages for? I suppose she was only hired to teach the Child? As to Beauty, *Jessie*, she has certainly a fresh Complexion (which you don’t often see now), but I always mistrust such a *very* smiling Countenance—no one can tell if such People are not *Jesuits in disguise*! The Roman Catholics *do* send just such sweet-looking Creatures about, and I should not wonder if she is an Agent of theirs to pervert the little Girl; and *then*, you know, all the property would fall into their Hands. At all events, a *Governess* has no right to set up for a *Beauty*, in *my* opinion!”

Let us take a peep into *Lady Egerton’s* Drawing-room; for Thursday has come, and it is filled with our Village Friends. The *Morgan* Family are singing, *Mr. Soft* turning over the Leaves for *Rose*, who plays; *Uncle Joe*, with *Mabel* on one Knee, and *Bounce’s* Nose on the other, is saying something

thing which has made *Jessie Gray* laugh (it takes very little to make *her* white Teeth visible); *Alice* and *Helen* are sitting together on a distant Sofa, over the back of which leans *Harry Wildman*. *Helen* seems to have taken a fancy to *Alice*, and looks more animated than usual. In a snug curtained Recess are to be seen the Heads of the Ladies *Jackson* and *Pry*, very close together (and, no doubt, they are picking everyone else to Shreds up there, or wondering what can keep the *Countess* and her Daughters away so long).

These distinguished Individuals, however, who are accustomed to London Hours, intend to look in for a few Minutes about Ten o'Clock. They would keep away altogether, were it not for hurting the Feelings of *Lady Egerton*; for "it will bring on a sad Fit of *ennui*," says *Lady Blanche*, "to pass half an Hour with People who are not the least *distingué*." But see, the Door opens at last, and they sail in like three stately Swans.

I have not much to say about them, for the *Countess* (who consists chiefly of black Velvet and Diamonds) sinks into an easy Chair near *Lady Egerton*, and is soon lost, either in Reverie or Slumber. *Lady Blanche*, who is a haughty Beauty, with a pale Face and blue moire antique Robe, glides further off still, and disappears behind her Fan. *Lady Constance*, who is plain and a great Talker, is by far the most agreeable, and tries to make up for her want of Beauty (as plain People often do) by affable Manners. Therefore, of all People in the Room, she singles out *Alice*, the quiet little Governess, in her plain black silk Dress, (though much astonished that *Lady Egerton* should allow *her* to be present at an Evening Party!) and, almost overwhelming her with Scent and Crinoline, seats herself near her; and *Miss Pry* (who has moved her Seat) hears the following Conversation:—

“Pray, *Miss Moore*, how *do* you manage to exist in the Country all the Winter?”

“Oh,



“ Oh, I am quite a Country-bird, and can make myself happy, Winter or Summer ! ”

“ Astonishing ! nay, it is marvellous ! that any one but a Dairy-maid can live amongst bare ploughed Fields at this time of Year ! And do you *walk* in this wild Country ? I should expect to be shot by Poachers ! ”

“ I am very happy here,” said *Alice*. “ I walk with *Mabel*, or drive with *Lady Egerton* ; and sometimes ride with *Admiral Trueman* ; and visit the Schools and poor People.”

“ Do you really ? how very odd ! but the Peasantry are *so* uncultivated, and you are sure to take *fevers* in Schools, you know ! What a strange Life you must lead ! *no excitement* ! I should expire in a Week ! I consider London dull and flat ; in fact, the only place where it is *possible* to keep up your Spirits at all is *Paris*. Venice is very well for a Fortnight, but you get tired of gliding about in those Gondolas ; and, in fact, I began to think I was a Ghost ! Then there is Naples, but there you Live in hourly expectation of being

being swallowed up by an Earthquake—at least, *I* did. Rome is very well for those who care about Pictures, and so on;—(you never saw such a River as the Tiber, it's as yellow as Coffee)—and Switzerland, I *must* say, I was disappointed in; and there I had an attack of Ophthalmia, with that eternal Snow, Snow, Snow!”

*Alice* listened in horrified silence, as *Lady Constance* hopped from one Country to another, without expressing the least admiration of any—Countries which *she* had thought of, dreamed of, and longed to see, with the deep longing of her Artist-nature.

*Lady Egerton* here asked *Lady Blanche* for some Music, and *Mr. Wildman* led her to the Instrument. She played in the most fashionable and approved manner, with a great deal of Style, but not much Taste, and certainly no Feeling. An Italian Song followed; but the Voice, though correct and highly-finished, was perfectly Soulless. *Uncle Joe* fidgeted on his Chair, and was going to whistle  
“Rule

"Rule Britannia," but thought better of it. Then *Alice* was asked to sing, and warbled forth, in sweet, rich notes, one or two of "Moore's Melodies," which go straight to the Heart when they *come* from the Heart. *Uncle Joe* seemed to think so, at all events; for his Eyes glistened, and he beat time on his rheumatic Knees, and every now and then rushing up to turn over a Leaf (but was always too late).

*Pop*, who was here for the Michaelmas Holidays, (how often his Holidays come!) asks his Cousin *Blanche* (with whom he has fallen in Love) if she don't think *Mabel's* Governess a "stunner!" The young Lady, who has no idea what a "stunner" is, lifts her dreamy Eyes, and replies that every one seems to be talking about that "young Person," who has too high a Colour, and not so much Style as her French maid, *Lisette*; and then glides away from him. *Pop*, however, is determined to show his Cousin that he has an opinion of his own, and thinks  
he

he will patronize *Alice* accordingly; so he jumps over the back of the Sofa, and alights just on *Uncle Joe's* particularly painful Corn, upon which that worthy Mariner growls out, "Can't you keep your Feet, youngster? or do you fancy you're rolling about in the Bay of Biscay?" The Youth places himself before *Alice*, with his Hands in an easy and graceful posture, and, having got thus far, can't think of anything to say; but feeling that he is expected to speak, at length comes out abruptly with "Are you fond of Cherries, *Miss Moore*?"

*Alice* laughs, and answers that indeed she is, and ought to be, being a Kentish person.

"Are you really, though?" cries *Pop*, now eagerly enough; "why, *I* am a *Man* of Kent! Oh! there is no place like Kent, *Miss Moore*! what jolly Cream, and Hop-gardens, and Apples, Filberts, and Cherry Orchards! And the 'Men of Kent,' you know, were never conquered!--ar'n't we just proud of that! Fancy old Cæsar trying to  
land

land in *our* part of Kent, and being afraid of us fine painted Fellows! There isn't a Fellow at School can match *me, Miss Moore!* I beat them all to smash! and if you ask why? I tell you, because I am a 'Man of Kent'! Kent, in the Commentaries Cæsar writ, is termed 'the civillest Place in all this Isle. Sweet is the Country, because full of Riches. The People liberal, valiant, active, wealthy,'" repeated *Pop*, walking away with the bearing of *Harold*, Son of *Godwin*!

"*Pop*, you bore of a Boy, come and tell me who all these queer People are—I am dying to know," called out *Lady Constance*, as he passed by.

Not feeling much flattered, "the bore of a Boy," however, sat down by her side, answering: "Why, they are all very good-natured People in their way, except *Miss Pry*. I hate her, and make a point of worrying her Cats, and tying Crackers to her Shutters!"

"How diverting! cried his Cousin; "but, *Pop*, which is she?"

“Why, the one in the yellow Turban, with a sharp Beak, to be sure, talking at this moment to *Mrs. Jackson*, with a red Face, and a whole Plantation of Feathers nodding about—how she must tickle her Neighbour’s Nose, I should think!”

“You ridiculous Imp! tell me, now, who that little Woman is, talking to that Girl with the wide Mouth, who is always on the Laugh? I must say the old Lady has a very sweet Face, though her *Dress* would have done for *Mrs. Noah!*”

“That is *Miss Chirp*, talking to *Jessie Gray*. *Miss Chirp* is a regular *brick!* I wouldn’t worry *her* Cat for something!—she’s quite a stunner, and every one likes her. She and *Ben Hassan* live together.”

“Really! *Ben Hassan* is a faithful Black Servant, I suppose? probably, a Moslem who saved her Life? How romantic!”

“Nothing of the kind,” replied *Pop*; “only a huge *Cat*; and—would you believe it?—the dear old Lady puts *Walnut-shells* on  
its

its Feet when the Weather is Damp, because it has a delicate Persian Constitution !”

“No!—perfectly charming! I must be introduced to her, or I shall not sleep all Night! Lead me on to her.”

And the graceful Swan, led by *Pop*, the little Jackdaw, floated over to smiling *Teresa Chirp*, thereby causing a pang of Jealousy to shoot through the Breast of *Miss Pry*.



## CHAPTER XI.

THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

“ Art is long, and time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still like muffled drums are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.”—LONGFELLOW.

IT was wonderful how soon *Alice* settled down at the Abbey, and how natural and at Home she felt there; for, as *Jessie* said, *Lady Egerton* treated her more like a Daughter than a Governess. The Servants, also (who generally take their Tone from their Superiors), were kind and attentive to her. *Mrs. Crummie*, the Housekeeper, pitied her because she was a “poor motherless Dear,” and “favoured” her “*Sarah Anne*” uncommonly. Nurse (who was a melancholy Teetotaler) remarked that *Miss Mabel* and she were a pretty Couple enough, but with that



that bright Colour, and those white Hands, she would “decline away” before she was Twenty-five, or her experience might go for nothing. *Mr. Staid*, the Butler, who was a Person of considerable importance, and fond of using long Words, “approved highly of *Miss Moore*, and considered her an acquisition to the Establishment.”

Of course, Norton, like most Villages, had its Idiot—and “*Daft Eliza*,” as she was called, was a poor harmless Creature, chiefly supported by Charity. Every Monday Morning she appeared at the Abbey, and then it was little *Mabel’s* delight to run into the Housekeeper’s Room with a large Basin of hot Tea, and some thick Bread and Butter, for her, and sometimes a Shilling from her Mamma or *Uncle Joe*.

But now the end of October is come, and the Abbey is quite in a commotion, for the Wedding is to take place early in November. *Mrs. Wildman* and her Daughters are staying at the Rectory, which has been furnished to

*Mrs.*

*Mrs. Jackson's* Heart's content. The *Misses Wildman, Rose and Lily Morgan, Jessie Gray,* and *Mabel Egerton,* are to be Bridesmaids. The Wedding-cake is packed at *Gunter's,* ready to be sent down, and the Bridal Attire is on its way from Paris—even the Ring, in Silver Paper, is lying in the young Rector's Pocket. The Ceremony is to be performed by the Bishop of the Diocese, assisted by *Harry's* Uncle and *Dr. Cram,* his late Tutor.

The Village is in an unusual state of Excitement—Every one is doing something, or making something for the Bride, who alone appears composed and calm. *Mrs. Jackson* is in a perfect whirl of delight, and *Mr. Soft* flies about, and takes Notes and Messages from House to House, and looks as happy (*Jessie* says) as if he were going to be married himself.

It is the Fifth of November—the Day before the Wedding—dull, and soft, and grey—one of those melancholy Days, when it is more cheerful to sit over the Fire than

to

to wander without, and watch the brown Leaves float slowly and noiselessly to the Earth. At least, *Helen* thought so (who had just taken up her Abode, with her Mother, at the Abbey); and she was gazing intently at the bright Embers, when a light Step was heard in the Hall, and a blithe Voice called her Name. *Helen* started from her Reverie, and remembered that, *to-morrow*, she must promise to obey that very Voice. Slowly rising from her Seat, she was met by *Harry Wildman*, who exclaimed :

“What! my fair Bride within, such a lovely Morning as this? I have come to ask you, *ma chère Helen*, to walk with me across the Park. I have ordered my Horse to be brought to the other Gate; I am going to hunt, fair *Helen* of Troy, and will bring you home the Fox’s Brush to wear in your pretty little *Chapeau*.”

*Helen* went away, and in a few Minutes returned, attired for a Walk. As they passed through the Gardens, they came upon “*Daft Eliza*,”

*Eliza*," who was sitting upon the Ground, making up Nosegays, and singing softly to herself—

"Posies, Posies, buy my Posies,  
Faded are the Summer Roses ;  
Nought but Rosemary and Rue  
In their bridal Path I strew."

And, indeed, it *was* a curious *Wedding* Bouquet that was formed of such sombre Plants.

*Helen* turned to her Betrothed and remarked that it was not a good Omen; but *Harry* laughed heartily, and, throwing her Half-a-Crown, answered that "*Daft Eliza*" knew no difference between a Funeral and a Wedding, and he understood she made a point of attending both; "but," he added, gaily, "do not look so grave, *Helen*! it cannot possibly hurt *us*; and if *she* cannot strew Flowers in your Path to-morrow, *I*, at least, will do my best to scatter Roses in it all your Life."

*Helen* smiled rather sadly, and thought, "He does really love me! and what a poor return I make!" Then she said, "You  
*will*

*will* promise me, *Harry*, to give up *hunting* when we are married?"

He answered, "What! are *you* as timid as the rest of the fair sex, *Helen*? and would you deprive me of my favourite Sport?"

"It is not only *that*," she replied; "but is it *right* for a Clergyman to hunt?"

"Really, dear, I don't know—there is no harm in it, I believe—but I *do* intend to give up hunting. I know I am not all that a Parson ought to be (but I never wanted to *be* a Parson, *Helen*), and you must make me better. I will give up hunting—I will, *indeed*, after to-day. Beauty!" he exclaimed, patting his horse (for they had now reached the Park Gates), "this is our last ride together to the meet, old fellow!" Then, vaulting lightly into the Saddle, he waved his Hand to *Helen*, saying, "Adieu, for a few Hours, my Queenly Bride! I shall be in to Dinner by Six, and, when I return, let me see a smile on that pale Face, pray." He kissed his Hand again, and away flew his stately Charger.

Charger. Twice he looked back at *Helen*, leaning over the Gate, and then he turned the corner, and she saw him no more. Strolling slowly back through the old Avenue of Trees, whose Leaves, damp and withered, rustled beneath her tread, *Helen* forgot *Harry Wildman*, and wondered if any one swept away the Leaves and planted Flowers on a lonely Grave far away in India! Then she thought how *her* bright youthful hopes lay crushed and faded like the yellow things under her Feet! and wondered what there *was* worth living for, and how some people could still be happy, when every charm of Life had departed! What was it that made them so? she pondered.

When Luncheon was over, *Lady Egerton* remarked that her young Friend looked tired, and advised her to retire to the quiet of her Chamber, and her Maid should be sent to dress her before Dinner, when the *Wildmans* were to be present. More than this, her kind Hostess, knowing that she  
would

would be glad to be left alone, proposed to *Mrs. Jackson* that she should accompany her in a Drive, at some distance off.

So *Helen* sat all that long Afternoon, silent and alone in her own Chamber. Merry Voices came up to her Window, beneath which *Mabel*, *Alice*, and *Uncle Joe*, were playing "Hide and Seek," like three Children. "Oh, that ringing, clear, childish Laugh! there is nothing like it in the World," thought *Helen*; and she hoped it might be long ere the golden-headed little Fairy should lose it.

Scattered over the Room were Jewels and Dresses of every description. Upon the Toilet Table lay a Wreath of Pearls, which *Harry* had brought her only the Day before; and in the Dressing-room was the snowy Bridal Apparel—the rich white Dress, the long Veil, and the Chaplet of pure silvery Flowers. *Helen* placed the Orange Buds upon the dark Braids of her Hair, and looked in the Mirror. As she did so, a Shadow seemed to pass before her, and her excited Fancy gave it the

the Form of her dead Lover. She shuddered, and, casting aside the Wreath, determined no longer to indulge in vain Imaginations, and began to arrange her Jewels; but, restless and unhappy, she could settle to nothing; and wandering about the Room, until the shades of Evening had rendered every Object invisible, she went to the Window to watch for the return of *Harry Wildman*.

It was now Five o'Clock, and he would soon arrive to dress for Dinner. The Evening was mild and still, and *Helen* threw up the Sash and looked out. A bright Moon was already high in the Heavens, but struggling with the Clouds sometimes, and now shining forth with clear distinct Light. Suddenly, she hears the tramp of a Horse, hard and swift, coming up the Lane; it is *Harry*, and he will turn the Corner, and stop at the Park Gate. Hark! how furiously he rides! and he has *passed* the Turning, and is tearing on towards the Village—now the Tread gets fainter and fainter, and then dies away altogether.



gether. What is it that makes her Heart stop beating as she leans out of the Window, and causes her to spring up, and fly down Stairs? She hardly knows herself, yet she gains the Hall, and leaves the House, without anyone seeing her. Through the Park she speeds, she cannot tell why, and knows not where she is going, until she reaches the Gate near the Village; then she stops for a Moment, and listens.

The little Boys are still shouting, and asking People to "Remember, remember, the Fifth of November," (it is not likely that *Helen*, at least, will forget it). Onwards she goes up the Village, more slowly, for her limbs begin to fail her, and a strange terror is upon her. Before her are a cluster of people standing to gaze at a dark object borne beyond them. As *Helen* passes, they stare at her with white, awe-struck faces (she has no Bonnet on, and her dark hair is streaming over her brow). She rushes on madly now, and falls with a scream beside  
*those*

*those shattered remains!* Yes! she had seen the moonlight fall upon that pale Face, which had left her, only a few hours ago, so full of Life and Hope! It had, indeed, been his *last hunt*; and poor, gay, and thoughtless *Harry Wildman* was still for ever!

\* \* \* \* \*

“I knew there would be a Funeral soon!” said *Daft Eliza*, laughing gaily.



## CHAPTER XII.

HELEN AGAIN.

"Near thee, still near thee ! trust thy soul's deep dreaming !

Oh ! Love is not an earthly Rose to die !

E'en when I soar where fiery stars are beaming,

Thine image wanders with me through the sky."

MRS. HEMANS.

WE will draw a veil over the melancholy Death of poor *Harry Wildman*, over the agony of his Mother and Sisters, and the disappointment and remorse of *Mrs. Jackson*, when her only Child was brought back to the Abbey, in an almost lifeless state.

The shock sustained on that fearful Evening, acting upon the overwrought mind of *Helen* (who had been steeling herself for Months to conform to her Mother's wishes, and whose excitement and despair had only been subdued by a strong will), threw her into a Brain Fever, which, for some Days, threatened

threatened to deprive her of Life as well as Reason. It was well for her that she was at the Abbey, where the judicious treatment of *Lady Egerton* was of more service to her than the uncontrolled misery and self-reproach of *Mrs. Jackson*. Indeed, for a few Weeks, *Helen* could not bear the sight of her Mother, or the sound of her Voice, and would hide her Eyes; and implore *Alice* to “keep that Woman away.” To *Alice* herself she was always tractable, and child-like in her reliance on her; and, generally, the young Governess, with her gentle ways, but firm will, would be able to do more with her than any one else. *Alice* could now understand, as she listened to the poor Girl’s wild ravings, how much that Heart, which seemed so cold and indifferent to everything, had had to bear. *Helen* had always been an enigma to her—she thought her proud and reserved; but now, in the darkness and gloom of that Sick Chamber, the mystery was cleared up, and she pitied her, from her  
Heart;

Heart; and as *Alice* could not help loving any thing or any one that she pitied, she began to feel for her the affection of a Sister.

*Helen* would talk incessantly, in broken, incoherent sentences, and it made *Alice* weep to hear her. "I shall soon die," she would say, "and I don't want any one to come near me—you had better keep away, Mamma,—never mind what I say, Mamma; my Head is very bad. The Bed is on fire! and I am going blind!—Oh! my Head!—I don't want any one near me—yes, I do; I want that Governess, *Alice Moore*; she is the only Person I ever met with who is not *made up*; every one else is a *sham*—the whole World is a sham—I wish I were out of it! The most absurd thing is, they seem to think I am *Helen Jackson*!—perfectly ridiculous! She died years ago of a broken Heart; and they buried her in India, close to *Herbert Warren*!—You need not stand pointing at me!—Well, I *will* marry him, Mamma; and then you will not worry me so! You *cannot* love me,

G

me, Mamma, or you would not treat me so! —You may cut my Hair off, then; I am only a *Ghost*, and Ghosts don't want long Hair!"

*Helen* had always been passionately fond of *Dante's* "*Divina Commedia*," and now it seemed to be strangely mixed up with her excited fancies. She would say to *Alice*, "Gentle Spirit! why are you here in this Land of Shadows? You look Good and Fair, what Crime brings you amongst us? I am here because I committed a fearful Sin! I vowed to 'love, honour, and obey' *Harry Wildman*, at the Altar, when I had no Love to give him; and now I am here looking for *Herbert Warren*. Have you seen him? These Regions are very gloomy, and I can't find him!"

In a few Weeks, the violence of the Fever passed away, leaving her in a state of the utmost Weakness. One day, when she had been lying very quiet, watching *Alice* gliding with noiseless step about the Room, she suddenly

suddenly exclaimed, "Well! I suppose I am myself again; I was in hopes I should have died! And you, *Alice*, how you have been nursing me! and what Trouble I must have given you!—but I don't take it as any compliment to *myself*, mind. I know you would have done just as much for one of the Servants; or been just as happy on that bleak Common, soothing and petting old *Dame Haggins*. You are all alike; there is something about you, and *Lady Egerton*, and *Miss Chirp*, which I can't make out—everything for *Duty*, I suppose."

"Why, Dear!" said *Alice*, "Duty is a cold word to use to a Friend! It has been truly a *Pleasure* to me to wait on you, dear *Helen*! I have felt, and do feel, so much for you; but I must not allow you to talk any more."

"I *must* talk!" cried *Helen*, looking flushed and excited—"I must talk while I can! I feel strong now—I must ask you why you pity me, and what I have been saying?"

“Not now, Dear; lie still—you must indeed—I cannot allow you to speak.”

“I *will* speak!” cried the impetuous Girl; “and if you leave the Room, I shall talk to myself. Come, *Alice Moore*, I shall not feel composed till I have told you what I have had on my Mind for so long. I need not tell you that it must be sacred between us ever more, for poor Mamma’s sake; and I would never tell *you*, only I am sure I have been speaking so much about *Herbert Warren*. Let me lean my Head upon you, and do not look at me, dear, kind *Alice*. I will speak very low, and not become excited, indeed. A few years ago,” said *Helen*, her pale Face resting upon the Arm of *Alice*, “I was very happy—always merry and joyous—and, though very high-spirited and self-willed, I don’t think I was so bad as I am now. Poor Papa was alive then, and I was engaged to his favourite Nephew, my own beautiful, brave Cousin, *Herbert Warren*. I need not say anything about *him*, except that there  
was



was no one in the World so noble, and so good. Yes, *good, Alice!*—oh! so much better than myself! I knew that he, and only *he*, could make something of my wild, untamed Spirit. *Herbert* was very rich, and so Mamma was pleased; and our Wedding was just about to take place, when Papa was taken very ill, and that put it off. Then *Herbert* lost a great deal of Money, I can't explain how, but it was through his generosity to a Friend; poor Papa still wished us to marry before he died, and said we should have enough to live upon; but Mamma did not like our only having hundreds, when we should have had thousands; and so she put it off, and off, until Papa died, and then she said our Engagement must end. I was very wilful, and would have married him in spite of every one; but *Herbert* said we could not expect to be happy if we acted against Mamma's wishes. Mamma took me to London, to my Aunt, *Lady C.* I was very handsome, I believe, then. I tried to forget my  
my

my grief in gaiety. They wanted me to marry a young Baronet. I could not bear him, but they tried to make *Herbert* think I cared for him. I was not allowed to see *him*, and at last he got an Appointment in India. He wrote to bid me 'Good-bye,' and said, although the future looked dark and dreary, if it was God's will, we should yet meet again. That was the only Letter I ever received from him; they never gave me any more; and nine Months after that we heard of his Death. Mamma wrote to the Chaplain, and he told her where he was buried, and sent a Sketch of his Grave; and that is all I know about poor *Herbert*. After that, I went Abroad with my Aunt; I was too wretched to remember much about it. When we returned, we came to settle down in this Village. I cared for nothing but Books; if I had not been fond of Reading I think I should have gone Mad! I know it was very selfish to please only myself, and I used to think if I could go about, and  
do

do good, like *Miss Chirp*, it might be better for me; but I thought it was no use, now *he* was dead, to care for anything. You know the rest—how, at last, I was about to marry poor *Harry Wildman*, to please Mamma. Oh! *Alice*, since I have been ill, I have thought that God's ways are very wonderful! and the dreadful event, which so horrified us all, has saved me from doing what must have been displeasing to Him. Now I am very tired—I want to go to Sleep. Sing to me, *Alice*—sing the 'Evening Hymn,' which I used to play for *Herbert*, Years ago. What! you are crying! I did not think any one would cry for *me*! Kiss me, *Alice*, my kind Friend! If I live, I think you may make me better. If I die, put that little Picture of *Herbert* upon my Heart when they bury me—just here, *Alice*!”

END OF PART THE FIRST.

PART



PART THE SECOND.



CHAPTER I.

ANOTHER RECTOR.

"I would express him simple, grave, sincere ;  
In doctrine uncorrupt ; in language plain,  
And plain in manner." COWPER.

"AN extraordinary thing," said *Miss Pry*,  
"to give the Living to a Person not connected with the Family! a perfect *nobody*!—a young Man, I understand, who could not get Cheese to his Bread a few Months ago!—in fact, *just* a *Curate* in a large manufacturing Town."

"Dear *Angelina*," said *Miss Chirp* (who was pouring out the Tea in her snug Room),  
"bear with me, and pardon the interruption, but is not a Curate God's ordained Minister as well as a Bishop? and may we not hope that the young Man has done his Master's  
Work

Work well and wisely hitherto, and is now sent to be a Blessing to Norton? At least, *I* trust so."

"I heard that he *was* a distant Relation of the *Wildmans*," said *Jessie*, "and that he arrived last Night."

"And carried his Carpet-bag from the Station *himself*!" put in her Aunt. "Now *I* think that beneath the dignity of a Clergyman."

"And they wanted to ring," said *Rose Morgan*, "directly they found out he was come; but he went into the Church and stopped them, (and paid the Ringers, *Miss Pry*!) and said, after the sad Event which had taken place so lately, he should wish his Introduction to be as quiet as possible. Now *I* call that good Taste, don't you, *Jessie*?"

"Well, my Dears," added *Miss Chirp*, "it *was* thoughtful of the young Man, and his *name*, at all events, is an auspicious one! *Hope* has come amongst us, and may he neither disappoint us, nor——"

"It is time *something* was done, I think," began *Miss Pry*. "That worthless young *Wildman* was a scandal to the Place, and his Death a just——"

"Hush, Dear, oh, hush!" said *Miss Chirp*, earnestly; "it is not for *us* to discuss the ways of Providence. Whatever were the poor young Man's failings, let us forget them now. God is very merciful! and shall *we* be otherwise? I must say, since his Death, I have heard many things of him which pleased me—he certainly gave largely to the Poor. You *must* allow that he had a kind Heart, *Miss Pry*?"

"He took old *Richard* down a Blanket himself, when he found out he only had one," said *Jessie*.

*Miss Chirp* wiped her Eyes. *Mrs. Chapman* said "Indeed, my Dear!" and did not speak again until they went up to Dress, when she had added another *Shell* to her Counterpane.

All that had been said about *Mr. Hope*  
in

in *Miss Chirp's* Parlour, for a wonder, was true. A few Months ago, he had been a poor struggling Curate, and *Mr. Wildman*, a distant Relation, had now presented him with the Living of Norton. He had been Poor only from Choice, however, for his Uncle, a rich Merchant, had offered to purchase for him a good Living; but *Arthur Hope* had scruples of Conscience on that Subject, and declined to accept it.

For himself, indeed, he cared little for Riches, but his widowed Mother was entirely dependent upon him; and he sometimes sighed when he thought of the Comforts they would have procured her.

A hundred and twenty pounds a Year was *not* a superabundant Sum for two People to exist upon, to say nothing of the claims of a large and impoverished District—for what is so great a Trial as to see Distress which you are unable to relieve?

Many a long Night did *Mr. Hope* pass in his Study, writing Articles for Magazines

or

or Papers, after a hard Day's Work of visiting his sick People; and in the Morning, his Mother—dear old Lady!—would notice his pale Cheek, and remark that a Town Life did not agree with him, little thinking how he had been employed through the Hours of darkness.

She was justly proud of her Son, who was as thoughtful as a Husband, and as tender as a Daughter to her; but she never knew half the Sacrifices which he made for her sake.

And so, Year after Year, they lived in that busy Town, a most loving and happy Pair—he steadily and truly doing his Master's Business, caring neither for the Applause nor the Frown of the World—firm and unflinching in the path of Duty, not only preaching, but living a true and Christian Life, following the great Example humbly, but so quietly, that, as *Miss Pry* said, he was a perfect “nobody” in the Eyes of the World. He was not a *fine* Preacher, and would never have



have made a Sensation in Exeter Hall; but there are some Men who preach more by their Lives and Actions than their Words, and *Mr. Hope* was one of them.

Such is the Picture I have briefly sketched of the new Rector come to reside amongst us. I have passed over many Years of his Life in few words—I might, perhaps, have filled Volumes with his *Deeds*, during the eight Years of his Labours among the working Classes—but, in the true spirit of Alms-giving, they are shrouded in Oblivion, and only known to the “Father which seeth in secret.”

And now were the Labours of *Mr. Hope* begun in our Village. Strange to say, every Cottage was visited by him before the Houses of his richer Neighbours, which highly offended some of our good People. At last, he called upon all his Parishioners, and, as he began with the Abbey, we will see how he was received there.

*Lady Egerton* was working in the Drawing-room, little *Mabel* playing “Buy a Broom”

Broom" on the Piano, and *Alice* looking over her, when the *Rev. Arthur Hope* was ushered in. After receiving him with her usual kind and gracious Manner, the Lady of the Mansion turned to introduce *Alice* (unlike many Persons, she made a point of presenting "the Governess" to her Visitors); but she was surprised to see a Flush of Pleasure pass over her Face, as she extended her Hand to him, and he exclaimed, "*Miss Moore*, I am truly glad to see you!—strange that I should find *you* here, amongst my new Flock!"

Then *Alice* explained to *Lady Egerton* that she had resided for a short Time in *Mr. Hope's* Parish, and experienced much Kindness from him, at a Time when she greatly needed it.

The new Rector smiled at this, and said, "The Kindness was all on your Side, *Miss Moore*; and my Schools and poor People, I assure you, missed you sadly when you left the Town."

"I am

“I am very differently situated *now*, *Mr. Hope*,” said *Alice*. “I am so happy here, that I never can be thankful enough! *Lady Egerton*, *Mr.* and *Mrs. Hope* were my Friends when I literally had not a Friend in the World! Is your Mother well?” asked *Alice*; and then stopped, as she saw an expression of sadness pass over his Face.

“She is well,” he answered, “and at Peace—she is gone Home, *Miss Moore*, to a fairer Home than I could give her upon Earth. I buried her only a few Months ago. She often spake of you, and bade me, should we ever meet again, to give you her Blessing.”

The Eyes of *Alice* were full of Tears, and, as she turned away, *Lady Egerton* began to speak to her Visitor of his new Labours.

When he had left the Room, *Alice* told *Lady Egerton* how she first became acquainted with *Mr. Hope*.

“Before I came to the Abbey,” said the Governess,

Governess, "I lived with one or two People, who were quite different to you, *Lady Egerton!* I forgive them all, and do not wish to speak harshly about them, only I must tell you something of them, that you may understand the Obligation I am under to *Mr. Hope* and his Mother. Last May, after the Death of my Grandmother, I took a Situation as Governess, in the Family of a rich Manufacturer, in the Town where *Mr. Hope* was then Curate. My 'Master and Mistress' (as I was desired to call them) were vulgar People, who had once worked in the Mills which now belonged to them. However, I should have cared little for the dropping of h's, and that sort of thing, if they had possessed kind and Christian Feeling. I saw little of the Master, and the young Children I soon grew fond of, but the elder Daughters seemed to regard me as quite beneath their notice; and I suffered sometimes from the violent Temper of their Mother. I tried to bear it patiently, and to pity them for what it would have been beneath

neath me to resent; and we were going on in this way until one unfortunate Sunday, when I fell under their displeasure in this Manner:—It was at the Evening Service, when the Church was much crowded, that a delicate-looking old Lady, in Mourning, was ushered into our Pew. I believe I gave her my Place, and paid her a few simple Attentions, so that when she became faint, towards the close of the Service, she looked at me imploringly to lead her from the Church. As no one else offered to accompany her, I, of course, left the Church with her, noticing, as I did so, a frown on the Face of *Mrs. Dibbs*. The poor old Lady, feeling somewhat refreshed in the open Air, expressed a Wish to return Home, at the same time fearing that she could not accomplish the Walk without the assistance of my Arm. It was a Mile to the part of the Town where she lived, and I had been requested always to be at Home by Eight o’Clock; but I hoped, in a Case like this, my breaking through

through the Rule would be excused. It was past Nine when we reached — Street, and I turned to go back, when I remembered that I was quite ignorant of the windings of that part of the City; and though it was a Summer Evening, I did not feel comfortable at the thought of returning alone. The kind old Lady told me to come into her House and wait a few Minutes, until her Son, the Curate of St. Peter's, should return, when he would walk back with me. I then discovered that the Lady whom I had led from Church was the Mother of *Mr. Hope*, with whom I had already become acquainted from teaching in his Schools. Soon after that, he came in, when I requested him to see me into — Square, without loss of Time. As we stood at the Door, and I rang for admittance, with a beating Heart I heard the Clock strike Ten. I bade *Mr. Hope* 'Good night,' and entered the House; and what was my surprise to see my Box ready corded in the Hall,

Hall, and *Mrs. Dibbs* waiting at the Drawing-room Door, with a Face foreboding a coming Storm. You will hardly believe it, *Lady Egerton* (I should not believe it myself had I seen it in a Book), but *Mrs. Dibbs* told me that I had broken through her Rules in remaining out so late, and she could no longer keep me as Instructress to her Children. She handed me a Purse, said my things had been put up, and her Servant should call a Cab for me! Almost overpowered with astonishment, I tried to explain the cause of my Absence, and asked for a few Days to try and obtain another Situation, adding that I had no Friends there who would receive me. She answered that that was my own Fault; if I had 'conducted myself properly,' I should be sure to find Friends everywhere; but my conduct had been anything but satisfactory, and she could no longer keep me in her House, or my Example might be injurious to her Daughters! She ended with a stamp of her Foot, and said she should

should be glad to see the last of the 'fine Lady,' who had more airs than was becoming to a Governess, ordering the Servant, at the same time, to call a Cab for *Miss Moore* directly. I entreated her to wait, at least, another Day; but no, bewildered and weeping, she led me to the Door, and telling the Coachman to drive to the —— Hotel, we soon rolled away. I was in a perfect Dream as we rattled through the wide Streets of that great, busy Town. People were passing up and down, or returning from an evening walk, back to their snug Homes. 'Home!'—what a word to me, who had none! I could fancy how the Curtains were drawn, and smiling Faces were gathered within many a House which I passed that Night, while I was friendless and alone, amid that Sea of human Beings. Oh! *Lady Egerton*," said *Alice*, with a shudder, "you cannot know what it is to feel utterly Homeless! The Lights from the Hotel flashed upon my Face, and recalled my wandering Thoughts. I felt for my



my Purse to pay the Man, when—oh! horror!—it was gone! I must have dropped it on the Pavement, in my hurry and confusion. For a moment I felt my Situation more painfully than ever. What could I do without Money? Suddenly, I thought of *Mr. Hope* as the only Person I knew there likely to help me; and the gentle Face of his Mother came back to my remembrance. I would go to them. They, at least, were Christian People, and would feel for the lonely Stranger. I requested the Coachman to drive there. The Door was opened by *Mr. Hope*, who led me into the little Room where his Mother was lying on the Sofa. Shrinking from intruding upon those who were almost Strangers to me, I told my Story with a faltering Voice, but was soon made welcome, and cheered by the dear old Lady, who, taking my hand, bade me dry my Tears, and believe that they would do all in their power to make me happy, as long as I liked to remain with them.

them. *Mr. Hope* expressed no surprise at the part *Mrs. Dibbs* had acted, and said it was not the first time that her Governesses and Servants had been dismissed in the same manner. Her name was never mentioned between us again, and I am sure I forgive her from my Heart," said *Alice*, "and only hope that her own Children may never know the Misery which I endured that Night. Not wishing to be a burden upon my kind Hostess, I wrote to some Friends in Kent, who, in a few weeks, procured me another Situation; but, in the short time that I was under their Roof, I received the most motherly kindness from *Mrs. Hope*; and her failing Health gave me, I trust, a few opportunities of being useful to her. Of her Son I saw little; he was from Home all day, and, when he returned, was generally writing in his own Study; but what I *did* see of his Conduct to his Mother, and what I heard of him from his People, whom I sometimes visited at his request, led me to regard him  
very

very highly; and I think you are most fortunate in having him as the new Rector of your Parish."

"I am glad to hear so pleasing an account of our Clergyman," answered *Lady Egerton*; "and I can well understand with what feelings of gratitude you must regard him. Poor Child!" she continued, "you are very young to have experienced such harsh treatment; and the World must seem a very dreary place to you!"

"Not *now*, dear *Lady Egerton*," *Alice* replied (while Tears filled the soft Eyes looking with such interest upon her)—"oh! not now! No one has ever been so kind to me before; indeed, I feel very grateful to you! I revere—may I say, I love you?"

"Surely!" said *Lady Egerton*; "my little *Mabel* has taught me to love *you* from the first. I was attracted towards you from the resemblance you bear to a loved and departed Friend. *Alice*, I trust your wanderings are  
over

over now, and you will be sheltered here from the cold and careless World."

"God has been very good to me in guiding me here," said *Alice*, thoughtfully; "and, doubtless, the lessons I have received, although hard ones, were sent to be useful to me. Perhaps, my sweet Home, and my Grand-mother's tender care, were taken from me lest I should forget what she ever tried to teach me, that we are all "Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth, and should look towards Heaven only as our Home."



## CHAPTER II.

### NEWS FROM THE CRIMEA.

"Then shook the hills with thunder riven,  
Then rush'd the steed to battle driven,  
And louder than the bolts of Heaven,  
Far flash'd the red artillery."—CAMPBELL.

"Not one, perchance, so blithe as he  
To the rush of battle rode ;  
Not one that mused so solemnly  
On life, and death, and God."—FOUQUE.

"OH, *Miss Moore*, you are such a Scholar, Miss, or I would not make so free as to trouble you, but would you direct a Letter for me, to the Place where they are all fighting?"

This was said to *Alice* one Morning, by *Ellen*, the rosy Housemaid, who came to her with very red Eyes, and a Letter in her Hand.

As I had before remarked, *Alice* was a Favourite with the Servants at the Abbey, and she now kindly inquired of *Ellen* if she

H

had

had a Brother or any Relation in the Crimea of whom she had heard bad News that Morning?

“No, *Miss*,” answered the Girl, with a Blush, “it’s not my Brother that’s wounded so badly again; it’s *Harry Brooks*, the Son of blind *Richard*, if you please, *Miss*. ”

*Alice* said she was sorry to hear it, and asked if his Father had been informed of it.

“No, *Miss*; it will break his Heart when he hears it! Oh, *Miss Moore*!” said *Ellen*, with another Burst of Tears, “it’s all my doing! I have murdered poor *Harry*!” Then, in answer to a kind, sympathising Look from *Alice*, she added, “You see, *Miss Moore*, we have been fond of each other ever since I first came to the Abbey—there wasn’t a steadier Lad in the Place than *Harry Brooks*—and my Mistress allowed it; but you see, *Miss*, I was a foolish, vain Girl, and too fond of Admiration, and that’s what did it, *Miss*. *Harry* told me, one Day, I would flirt with any one, and I was angry, and told him he  
had

had better give me up then (I did not mean it), and so we had a Quarrel, just about the time them wicket Sargints was going about with Ribbens in their Caps; and oh! *Miss Moore*, *Harry Brooks* 'listed, all through me, and old *Richard* took on dreadfully. And this Morning I got a Letter, *Miss*, to say he's hurt awfully, and I have written to ask him to forgive me, for, oh! *Miss Moore*, I loved him dearly all the Time, and may be you would like to read the Letter, *Miss*."

So while the distressed Maiden stood by, rubbing her swollen Eyes with her Apron, *Alice* took the Letter, and read as follows :

"*Scutari*,

"*Nov.*

"Dear *Ellen*,—This comes hoping it will find you well, as it leaves me wounded at the present Time. I have got a Comrade to write and break it to you, that you may tell the dear old Gentleman, and I hope, please God, he will bear up against it; but my Leg is clean took off by a Russian Gun

in the glorious Battle of Inkermann, fought on the Fifth of November, where we completely routed the Enemy, though overpowered with Numbers, and gained such a Victory as will sound through the World, Thanks be to Providence, overcome as we were with Numbers, and not giving Way an Inch, though falling in Heaps of glorious Dead, who did their Duty to their Country, as I did mine, I hope, which will be some Comfort to the old Gentleman. I will try and set on Paper, as well as I can, a few Particulars of this Action, which will make England ring in a few Days. On the Fourth of November I had been all Night out in the Trenches, which is sharp Work enough. Howsomever, I tried to keep out the Cold, by thinking of the dear old Village, and wondering if the Boys would make a Fire on Black Hill. *Mr. Frank* was on Duty too, and he was talking of you all (*Mr. Frank* is a real Gentleman, and as brave a Soldier as ever knocked over a Rooshion). Well, we  
was



was going in quite early in the Morning, when the Alarm was given, and we were soon in the Thick of the Fight. *Mr. Frank* dashed into them, and fought like a young Lion. I saw him fall twice, and once, I am proud to say, I saved his Life. We fought our Way through a Column of the Enemy, twenty Rooshions to one of us! When our Cartridges were gone, we gave them a Taste of cold Steel!—oh, it was sharp Work!—but *Mr. Frank* cheered us on as if it had been a Fox-hunt. Well, we both fell together on the Top of the Hill; I tried to rise, but it wouldn't do; *Mr. Frank* got up again, but soon fell from Loss of Blood (he had a Musket Ball through his Shoulder); howsomever, he is a bit of a Doctor, you know, and he bound up his Wound as well as he could, and mine too, or I should have been a dead Man. After that, I don't remember Nothing, till the Battle was over, and we was carried in at Night; but as evening came on, it was bitter cold, and *Master Frank* had  
taken

taken off his Jacket, and thrown over me, saying, You are worse wounded than I am, *Harry*; but keep a good Heart, Man. Well, I was thought so bad that I was sent to Scutari, and that's where I am at the present. I have lost a Leg, and other Wounds besides, and if I never live to get back, I hope we die Friends, dear *Ellen*; but if I do come Home, I can't expect you to look upon a poor Cripple, whose Leg was took off doing its Duty to its Country, I hope. I must not forget to say there is a real Lady, beautiful and good, attending to the poor Soldiers in this Hospital. She must love God, as well as us poor Fellows, or she'd never have comed out here. I can say no more, but if I live I'll write you Word. This comes with my kind Respects to you and all Friends at Home; and break it gently to the dear old Gentleman; from his dutiful Son and your sincere Well-wisher, I hope,

“HARRY BROOKS,

“*H.M. — Regiment.*”

*Alice*

*Alice* tried to comfort the poor Girl as well as she could, and promised to get *Jessie Gray* to break it to blind *Richard*. She would do it best, *Ellen* thought, as the old Man was used to her; and *Alice* fancied that *Jessie* would like to read of the brave and generous *Frank Morgan*.

Poor *Ellen*! she had been a foolish, hasty tempered Girl, but she had grieved sadly for her conduct, and tried to make up, by Kindness to his Father, for driving away his Son in his old Age. Many a little Comfort found its Way to his Cottage, bought by her with the Wages which she once spent only on Dress; and now, *Ellen* thought, if *Harry* only might be spared to come back again, she should be more proud of him than ever, although he *had* lost a Leg "doing its Duty to its Country!"

*Lady Egerton* had begged *Alice* to call at the good Doctor's, and make every kind inquiry after *Frank Morgan*. So *Alice* set off for the Village, musing, as she walked,  
upon

upon the sorrow and uncertainty which had come upon its Inhabitants during the last few Weeks.

Arrived at the "Oaks," she was shown into the large, old-fashioned Dining-room, where great *Morgans* and little *Morgans* were all seated round the Table—the younger members of the Family preparing Lessons to repeat to their Sisters, and the elder ones working; but the unusual quiet of the generally merry Party, and the sorrowful looks of all, plainly said that their Thoughts were far away with *Frank* before Sebastopol. Poor little *Mrs. Morgan*, with his Letter in her Hand, and the fat Baby on her Lap, sat by the Fire, and *Jessie's* solid God-child was nearly washed away with her Tears.

"You are come to inquire after our *Frank*, I know," said she; "it is like *Lady Egerton's* kindness. She will be sorry to hear that the brave Boy has got wounded, though we hope not dangerously. Would you like to read his hasty Letter, written, as it must have been,

been, in great suffering?—but the dear Fellow thought I should be frightened to see any other Handwriting.”

“I am so very sorry for you all,” said *Alice*. “I am a Soldier’s Child myself, *Mrs. Morgan* (my Father was killed in Battle, when I was only a few Weeks old), and I have just read a Letter mentioning your brave Son, and feel quite interested in him.”

“A Soldier’s Child! and your Father killed in Battle! why *bless* you, my Dear!” said the little Woman, handing *Frank’s* Letter over for her inspection.

And here is the Epistle which had cast such a gloom over the happy Family that Morning.

“*Camp before Sebastopol,*  
“*Nov. 6th.*”

“My dear Father,—Before this reaches you, you will have heard that we have just gained a most glorious Victory. I cannot enter into particulars now, but, please God, in a few Days, you shall have a fuller Account. You will

will see my Name in the Paper amongst the wounded; but, tell my Mother, the Hurt is slight. I am thankful to say, I have as many Limbs as I took into the Field with me, which is more than that glorious Hero *Troubridge* can say, or poor *Harry Brooks*, who had his Leg shot off near me. It is a bad Business, and the brave Fellow is taken to Scutari; and I don't expect to see him alive again. I have got shot through the Shoulder. The Ball is not yet extracted; there are so many who want looking to before me; and it grieves me sorely to think how useful I might be in the *old Trade* were I not disabled. Surgeons are very scarce out here, so tell *Willie* there will be plenty for him to do by-and-by. We had hard Work yesterday, I assure you. Tell *Fred* he needn't go back any longer to his musty old Greeks for deeds of Fame, for *Inkermann* has shown each Man to be a Hero, and a Host in himself! I could write a *History* from the Exploits of five Minutes! Such rushing through the drizzling Rain!

Rain! Such showering of Russian Bullets! Such cheering from our gallant Commanders! Such a show of cold bright Steel when our Cartridges were gone!—rushing onwards, onwards, over heaps of slain Enemies! Oh! it was grand to see a handful of our Fellows charging thrice their number! (though the Russ know how to fight, too). I grieve to say our Loss is heavy. The Guns made fearful havoc amongst us—and that is the shady side of this most glorious Engagement. Those awful Heights are dyed with England's best and bravest Blood! I have lost many Friends, but I have not the Heart to say more about them, save that they died as I should wish to die myself, if it is God's Will—a Soldier's Death! I must tell you, I have a firm Friend in the Chaplain of our Regiment. He is a splendid Fellow! You should have seen him Yesterday, in the thickest of the Fight, assisting and carrying off the Wounded, while the Bullets fell round him like Hailstones! He brought me into his own Tent; and I expect him in every Minute.

Minute. He has been up all Night comforting and praying with the Dying. And now I must bring this to a close. Tell my Mother not to be the least alarmed about me; I should soon get well with a little of her, or *Mary's*, nursing. I *may* be sent to Scutari; but I can't tell yet. Whatever happens to me, I am sure you and my dear Mother will be content to leave me in the Hands of that God who has so long preserved me amid the Horrors of Pestilence and War. With affectionate Love to all, and plenty of Kisses for the young ones, kind remembrances to all Norton Friends, and love to my little Cousin *Jessie*,

“Your affectionate Son,

“FRANK MORGAN.”

After *Alice* had exchanged a few more kind Words with the Family at the “Oaks,” and played “Bo-peep” behind the Curtains with fat toddling *Dora*, she paid a visit to the Cottage of *Miss Pry*, in order to fulfil her promise to *Ellen*.

The



The worthy Spinster was sitting, as usual, in her uncomfortable high-backed Chair, nipping Loaf-sugar, *Jessie* by her side, looking rather despairingly at a Pile of Account Books, which her Aunt had desired her to make up. Now, if there *was* anything which *Jessie* had no taste for (but, on the contrary, a great dislike to), it was Arithmetic.

Her Face assumed its usual bright, unclouded look at the entrance of *Alice*, but *Miss Pry* (who had not yet made up her mind if *Alice* was a "Jesuit in disguise," or only a "silly little chit of a Governess,") said coldly, "Be seated, *Miss Moore*; you find my Niece engaged in an Occupation which, when I was young, Girls made it their Business to excel in; but Times are sadly changed! and no young Lady of the present Day can tell you that two and two make four! I dare say now, *you*, with all your fine Accomplishments, and *Parley vou Franceis*, could not do a Sum of *Long Division* to save your Life?"

*Alice* (who, during this speech, had put her Handkerchief

Handkerchief up to her Lips, and indulged in a little fit of Laughter under her broad Hat) now looked up, and informed *Miss Pry*, with a grave Face, that she had once really got so far as the *Rule of Three*. And then she proceeded to acquaint her with the object of her Visit. While *Jessie* read *Harry Brooks'* Letter, her Aunt expatiated largely upon the Horrors of War, and couldn't see what Business *we* had to interfere in Quarrels between Turks and Russians, or, as she quaintly expressed it, "to pick another Dog's Bone." A Sob from *Jessie* caused them both to look up, and *Miss Pry* exclaimed, "What is the foolish Child crying for? Bless me! does the Wound of old *Richard's* Son affect you so strangely?"

*Jessie*, who had now, for the first time, become acquainted with *Frank's* misfortune, and who was far too simple and open to disguise her Feelings, leaned her Face upon the Table, and wept unrestrainedly.

"*Jessie*, this conduct is childish in the extreme," said her Aunt, going over to her, and giving

giving her Shoulder a good shake ; “ you read those foolish Books till you get as soft-hearted as a Pat of Butter ! ”

“ Oh, Aunt ! ” said the weeping Girl, at last, “ it is *Frank Morgan* ! he is wounded ! Oh, dear me ! ”

“ Dear me ! *indeed* ! ” answered the old Lady ; “ and if he *is* wounded, it would be more becoming in you, *Jessie Gray*, to leave his Mother and Sisters to weep for him. What is the young Man to *you*, pray ? ”

“ But I can’t help it, Aunt ; indeed I can’t. *Frank* is a great deal to me. I have known him all my Life ; he is just like my Brother, and he *is* my Cousin. Is there any harm in being sorry, Aunt ? ”

“ There may be no *harm* in it, Child, but it seems to me forward and bold, in a young Girl of eighteen, to feel so strongly for a young Man. I am grieved, *Jessie*, deeply grieved, that my Sister’s Child should thus have conducted Herself. I must request you (when you have read that Letter to blind  
*Richard*)

*Richard*) to retire to your own Room for the rest of the Day; and I trust that, in the Privacy of your own Apartment, you will have an opportunity to meditate at Leisure, and to see the Impropriety of your Conduct, in its true light. You had better raise no hopes in the old Man's Mind," added *Miss Pry*, "as to his Son's *recovery*; there is not the slightest chance of *that*.—We may look upon *Harry Brooks* and *Frank Morgan* as dead and buried by this time."

"Oh! *Miss Pry*," said *Alice*, laying her Hand gently upon that Lady's Arm; "poor *Jessie*!" but *Jessie* had left the Room, and was standing at the Door, waiting to let *Alice* out. You may be sure the young Governess had many a kind Word for the offending Niece. "Never mind, Dear," she whispered, "his Wound is not dangerous, and the next Accounts may be better; and what a brave, generous Fellow he must be! His Friends may well be proud of him, *Miss Gray*."

"Oh, thank you! call me *Jessie*, if you please.

please. You see, *Miss Moore*, I have known him ever since I can remember anything, and I was so shocked to hear about it. Was it so *very* unladylike to cry, do you think?"

*Alice* smiled, and said she feared *she* should have done just the same, had he been such a Friend of hers; and so they parted better Friends than ever.

Returning slowly Home, *Alice* began to muse on all the Events which had taken place in one short Week—passing under the bare Trees, slowly and thoughtfully, just as *Helen* had done on the eve of her Wedding-day—that dreadful Fifth of November, the last Day which dawned on poor *Harry Wildman*!—perhaps the last of peace which *Helen* would ever see. And on that very Day this grand Battle was fought! While little simple *Jessie Gray* was looking over her bridesmaid's attire, the brave and generous *Frank Morgan* lay bleeding and helpless on the Heights of Inkermann! While the gentle Voice of *Miss Chirp* read a Psalm to old *Richard*, in his quiet

quiet Cottage, the roar of Artillery and the rush of Thousands deafened the Ears of his Son! It was very dreadful to think of, and yet it made the Heart of the English Girl beat fast and high as she thought of her gallant Countrymen! And "If I had been a Man," said quiet *Alice Moore* to herself, while her Eye flashed, and her Colour mounted high, "I would wish to be just such another as *Frank Morgan*!—brave, and yet tender-hearted, joyous, and light of Spirit, yet ready to live or die for my Duty and my Country. Oh! I would, perhaps, rather wish to be that good Chaplain, equally brave, and yet engaged in trying to save the Souls as well as the Bodies of our poor Fellows out there. I wonder what his Name is! Oh! I hope *Frank Morgan* and *Harry Brooks* will both get well! If I were a *Fairy* now, it should all come right, like a Story-book. *Frank Morgan* should return, promoted and sound, to claim the hand of artless *Jessie Gray*. *Harry Brooks* should come back, of course, with such  
a neat

a neat Wooden-leg, that *Ellen* would be proud to marry him. *Miss Chirp's* Nephew, who was lost at Sea, years ago, should come from somewhere else : and even *Miss Pry*, cross and crabbed as she is, I would do something for. I would make her think a little more of *other People*, and then she would get happy directly. And *Helen* ! I *could* not wish any earthly Happiness for *that* poor crushed Heart ; no, I would rather wish that, if it is God's holy Will, He would take her gently to Himself, and unite her in endless Happiness with *Herbert Warren*. And here is the Abbey, towering through the Trees ; and sweet *Lady Egerton* will be wondering where I am ! It must be very nice—*not* to live in such a grand Place, but to be able to do so much good, as she does ! Well, I am only a poor little Governess, and can't do *much*, certainly ; but *Granny* used to say, We can all try to be *little lights* ; and if I can't be a Chandelier, I can try to be a Rushlight, or at least, a *Glowworm* : and one thing for *me*  
to

to do will be to train *Mabel* in such a manner, that, when she is Heiress of this stately Place, she may be a beautiful bright Star to the Village! And here is the Gate; and while I have been dreaming, I ought to have been *doing*. *Helen* should have taken her Physic long ago. Suppose some one should have given her that poisonous Lotion instead, to add another Victim to this List of Horrors!" And *Alice* (who had learned to moralize from her Grandmother) hastened upstairs, and glided gently in to the Bedside of *Helen*.





## CHAPTER III.

### HOW WE ARE GOING ON IN THE VILLAGE.

“And thou, too, whosoe’er thou art,  
That readest this brief Psalm,  
As one by one thy hopes depart,  
Be resolute and calm.

“O, fear not, in a world like this,  
And thou shalt know, ere long—  
Know how sublime a thing it is  
To suffer and be strong.”—LONGFELLOW.

“CHRISTMAS coming again!” *Miss Chirp* remarks. “It is wonderful how the Time slips by, and how those rosy-faced ‘Children go round, Year after Year, singing their Carols; bless their plump little Cheeks!”

*Miss Pry* makes the same remark (leaving out the blessing), and wonders, in these Days of Improvement, that the foolish Custom of giving Christmas-boxes is not done away with, which, for *her* part, she thinks is  
picking

picking the Pockets of honest People. The Heart of *Miss Pry* has no Christmas warmth in it as yet, but *Jessie* is doing what she can in the prim House to give it a more festive Appearance. She has had good News of *Frank* since we last heard of her; and, what pleases her almost as much, she has taken a favourable Report of *Harry Brooks*, together with a pair of Mittens, to his blind Father; so that *Jessie's* Mouth (which, as *Lady Constance* remarked, *was* rather a large one) is wreathed with Smiles, and *Jessie's* Eyes (which always laugh when her Lips and her Dimples are at rest) are dancing about in their old roguish manner. She is standing at this Moment on the top of the Piano, (woe to you, presumptuous Girl, should your Aunt come in!) sticking a lot of Evergreens in the Head, and over the Head, of her paternal Grandfather, whom she has sat opposite to for many Years, and often wondered how it was her Grandmother came to marry such a sour-looking, sharp-nosed little Man! Two young  
young

young *Morgans* (whom she has smuggled in during the absence of *Miss Pry*) are standing (as comfortably as they can be expected to stand, considering how they must get pricked should they move an inch) almost buried in the large Branches of Holly with which they are laden. It would be impossible to say *which* of that flourishing Family they are — *Tom*, *Lucy*, or *Fred*; but that they are *Morgans*, you may be certain, by the chubby Legs, which are just visible, and the hearty Laugh, which could only proceed from fat, good-natured, and well-fed Children.

“Here, *Fatima* and *Tiny*,” says *Jessie*, at length, when her Task is completed, “take this hot Cake and scamper : not that I want to get rid of you, Dears, only *Mamma* will wonder where you are; and tell *Fred* not to be weak enough to suppose he can take me in again *this* Christmas!—coming round dressed up as he did last year. What a plague you Boys are to be sure!” she added, hugging and kissing them till they got to the Door.

*Jessie*

*Jessie* had taken this Opportunity of decorating the House (which her Aunt considered a foolish Popish Custom), while that Lady was taking a Walk; and, Thanks to a *Steam Engine*, which was now used by some of the Farmers, that Walk had been prolonged.

“Why?” my readers will ask. Because *Miss Pry* (who prided herself on being an old-fashioned, sober-minded Person, and “none of your Radicals,”) was steadfastly set against anything *new*; and she looked on this great hissing Steam Engine with a suspicious Eye, and considered it almost *diabolical*, for what she knew! therefore, she made a Point of never *passing* it, and, on the present occasion, she had added a Mile to her Walk in consequence. *Miss Pry* had never entered a Railway Carriage in her Life. If other People chose to rattle off and break their Necks, they might, but *she* knew better!

She kept a very sharp Look-out upon *Mr. Hope's* Movements, as you may suppose, and was quite disappointed to find that he led such

such a very quiet Life. No one seemed to have anything to say against him; on the contrary, when she made any Inquiries at the Cottage, she only heard him spoken of gratefully; and he had certainly won the Hearts of the Children, by showing them Magic Lanterns and Dissolving Views at the School.

*Miss Chirp* and the new Rector had become Allies already, and he had given her plenty to do; for the little Woman said she "always felt more comfortable when working under the Clergyman." It was *Miss Chirp* who suggested a Cottage Lecture for those who could not come to Church. It was *Miss Chirp* who asked the Rector to have the Wednesday Service (which had been dropped since the death of her dear Father), for those who *could* come to Church. It was *Miss Chirp* who was always ready with her Advice, Counsel, and Prayers, to assist *Mr. Hope*.

There was, indeed, much to be done in the Village, but the Rector did not make a great stir directly he got there. Often did he sigh

over the empty Pews and the full Public-houses at Norton—over the Anxiety of the People for their bodily Comfort, and their Indifference to their spiritual Welfare. And then the beautiful old Church! From the first Minute of his looking on that noble Edifice, he had made up his Mind to put by the first few Years of his Income, and live on a Curate's Stipend, that he might restore and beautify it.

“No, no, *Arthur Hope*,” said he to himself, “you must do nothing to the Rectory or the Rectory Grounds; you must not think of marrying, my dear Fellow, until the Church is more like what the House of God should be!”

He did not doubt that *Lady Egerton* would help him, if made acquainted with his Wishes; but the Pleasure and the Self-denial should be all his own.

*Pop* is at the Abbey again (at least he was just now); at present he is in the Porch, with *Jessie Gray*, *Alice*, and other Ladies, making Festoons for the Church, and Puns at the same time. He is remarking that “*Hope* adorns

adorns everything," as the Figure of the Rector recedes through the Door, carrying away a Wreath of Evergreens. *Pop* approves of *Mr. Hope*, but *Mr. Hope* does not approve of *Pop*—at least, his Conduct at Church—and intends to tell him kindly about it.

*Mr. Soft* has disappeared from the Village, for, of course, the Work at Norton is light to the new Rector ; and here we take leave of the susceptible Curate (whose last idol was *Alice Moore*), and he vanishes from the Pages of our Story. It is only fair to state, however, that, previous to his leaving the Village, he received a Testimonial in the shape of a handsome Pencil-case, to say nothing of an innumerable quantity of Slippers, Markers, Kettle-holders, and Bands, from the Daughters of the Shopkeepers.

And what of *Helen* all this Time? Has she passed away, and taken her breaking Heart and disappointed Hopes down to the quiet Grave? No; she has "struggled back to Life" (as the Poet says). Her youthful Constitution

has surmounted the fearful Illness which prostrated her for some Weeks. She has now gone to the Sea-side with her Mother, and has determined no longer to lead a dreamy and inactive Life, but, as *Alice* hopes, to devote the Energies which have been restored to her to a better Purpose for the future.

“When I come back again, *Alice*,” said *Helen*, the Evening before she left her kind Friends at the Abbey, “I shall ask *Mr. Hope* to let me teach in the School; and you and *Miss Chirp* must take me into some of the Cottages with you. I never entered a Cottage in my Life; Mamma was always afraid of Fevers; so I sha’n’t know what to say at first! But Mamma will let me go with you, I know—she will not refuse me anything now. Really it is worth while being ill to get so petted!” And an expression of Happiness and Gaiety passed over her Face, which *Alice* had never seen there before. “After all,” said *Helen*, thoughtfully, as she gazed out of the  
the



the Window, where the bright Sunshine was playing over the Park and Grounds of the Abbey, and the clear, frosty Sky was red with its departing Splendour, "it is a beautiful World that we live in, and I wonder how I could ever long to quit it, as I did a little while ago! It was very wicked of me to be so fretful and impatient, and it is very merciful of God to spare me a little longer, until I have learned more of *Him*. I am sure *Herbert* would not wish me to die yet. Oh, *Alice*! I think I see now why *he* was taken from me when we might have been so happy! I thought it hard at first: but I should have made an Idol of him. I *did* make an Idol of him, and loved him better than myself, my Life, and my God. I think I shall be very different now, and Mamma has promised never to wish me to marry any one again; and I shall be an old Maid all my Life, like dear old *Miss Chirp*, I hope. *She* shall be my Pattern. I don't see why People should get fussy and prim  
just

just because they live alone; do you? Were *you* ever in Love, *Alice*? I am sure Lots of People must have fallen in Love with *you*; but were you ever in that State yourself?"

"Never," said *Alice*, with a Smile; "only in Love with Flowers, and beautiful Scenery, and Children, and Lots of People who have been kind to me: but then I love them all alike. Do you know, I don't fancy I shall ever become devoted to one particular Person. I am afraid I should think so much about him, that I should not do so much Good as if I were single; and then most young Men are so much alike in these Days—they all say such silly Things—and, oh dear!" continued *Alice*, laughing, "if ever I *do* fall in Love, it must be with some one not a bit like other People—a regular Koh-i-noor Diamond of a Man!"

"That's just what I used to think," said *Helen*; "and as you are not likely to find such a Person in this common-place World, you had better make up your Mind to settle down

down with me into a comfortable old Spinster. We should not quarrel, I think!"

"Oh no! we should be two dear old pattern Ladies, with heaps of Children, and young People, and Animals, always about us; and we can live in this Village, and have fat little toddling *Sally Parker* for our Servant; and little *Mabel* will be surrounded with tall Sons and Daughters by that Time, and will not forget her old Governess; and *Mr. Hope* (looking as grave as ever, only with white Hair) will come in sometimes and play at Chess with us."

"Indeed! What do you want to bring *Mr. Hope* (who will then be a crusty old Bachelor) into our quiet Parlour for?"

"Only because he is very superior to every one else," said *Alice*; "and we must not keep our Clergyman out, you know." And the Governess, hearing little *Mabel* run up-stairs, left the Room, well-pleased to see such evident Signs of returning Health and Spirits in the pale Invalid.

That

That Evening there was an Arrival at the Abbey—*Lord Percy Fitz-Loftus* (Son of the *Countess of Courtland*) came on a Visit of a few Days to his Cousin, *Lady Egerton*. Very handsome, like his Sister *Blanche*, was the dashing young Guardsman, and he evidently *knew it*; and believed he was conferring a decided Favour in bringing the Light of his Presence into a dull country Village like Norton. He appeared to be much attracted towards *Alice* on his first entering the Drawing-room, but when he had stooped down, and seemed to be inquiring of *Mabel* who she was, and the little one answered out loud (as Children always do when they should not), “My Governess!—isn’t she pretty?” he took no further notice of her.

A few Days afterwards, when he was leaving the Place, *Alice* happened to be coming through the Avenue as the Carriage was rolling down, and bowed a polite Farewell to him. The distinguished Youth, putting up his Eye-glass, stared at her as if she  
had

had fallen from the Moon, or, at least, as if *he* had never beheld her before, and passed on. *Alice* smiled—nay, she laughed—to herself, and thought “What strange People there are in the World!” But her Heart was not broken, and she ran in, and told *Lady Egerton* that her Cousin was not the least like her! (*Alice* could say just what she liked to *Mabel’s* Mother.)

“I am glad *Cousin Percy* is gone away,” said the little Girl that Evening, “I don’t like him much, Mamma. He teased *Bounce*, and said he wondered you didn’t have a Parisian Governess for me; and he never spoke a word to dear *Miss Moore*, and wasn’t even as polite to her as he was to *me*, though I am only a little Girl! I wish he wasn’t my Cousin, and I wish I could have whom I liked for my Cousin, and then I would choose *you*,” she said, running up to *Alice*, and putting her arms round her Neck. Then, when she had climbed upon her lap, she continued: “Nurse says we are just alike; now let me see—*Miss*

*Moore* has blue Eyes, and so have I—*Miss Moore* has pink Cheeks, and so have I (only mine are fatter)—*Miss Moore* has a Nose just like mine, *Uncle Joe* says; but *Miss Moore* has brown Hair, and my Curls are like *Bounce's* Ears, so I am afraid we are not Cousins after all!”

*Lady Egerton*, while her Child was speaking, gazed upon them both, as the two pretty Faces were so close together, and said, “*Mabel* is right, *Miss Moore*; there certainly is a strong Resemblance: and if she had ever had any Cousins, I should believe that you had been spirited away by some Fairy, and had now dropped from Elfin-land among us again! But my only Sister never had any Children, and I had no Brothers.”

“Was my *Aunt Mabel* pretty, Mamma? and did you love her so very much, that you always cry when you look at her Picture?” asked her little Girl.

“Yes, Darling; and when you are older you shall hear all about her: and, *Alice*, I will

will tell you, too, about the sweet Being whom you so much resemble, by some strange Chance; but not now—some Day when I feel stronger; it agitates me sadly to speak of her. Go to Bed now, darling Child! Good Night!”



## CHAPTER IV.

MABEL.

“Speak gently to the little child, it may not long remain.”

**HUSH!** tread very softly, and move very lightly, in the dark Chamber, in *Mabel's* Nursery: that Room with the gay Paper covered with Roses, and the white muslin Curtains, and the Pictures, and Birds, where *Alice* first saw her asleep. The Room is very quiet now; the Shutters are closed, and the Birds taken away, for *Mabel* cannot feed them; and she is asleep again, but ah! what a different Sleep! How the hot little Hands toss about, and the pretty pouting Lips are parched and dry. The golden Ringlets too, which *Alice* so often puts back from the throbbing Brow, are lying entangled



tangled on the Pillow. *Mabel* starts and moans, and *Lady Egerton* stoops down and says soft and soothing Words to her; or *Alice* sings in a low Voice, to hush her to Rest. Nurse moves about solemn and sad, and has told them in the Kitchen many times lately, that she knew from the first there was "something unearthly" about the Child; her Eyes had *that* in them which was not long for this World; and then proceeds to tell of Children she had nursed, with blue Eyes and golden Hair, like *Mabel's*, who all died young.

*Mrs. Crummie* says, "Surely not! Such a little Angel must be spared to grow up, and do as much good as her Mother." And then she wipes her Eyes, and tells Nurse not to "take on" so.

*Mr. Staid* looks very grave and important, shakes his Head, and allows that he thinks highly of *Dr. Morgan*, and if any one can bring her through it, *he* can. Even the Page (whom *Peg* will call Buttons), who  
generally

generally makes as much Noise as he can, is as quiet as a Mouse, and wipes his Knives and Spoons, and puts down his Glasses very gently, though his Pantry is far away from the little Invalid's Room.

Every one is fond of little *Mabel*, and every one grieves over her Illness; but no one seems to feel it more than *Uncle Joe*, who is just come to the Abbey. He is very quiet, and has eaten nothing since he entered the House yesterday; and he sat by her Bed nearly all Night, hoping that his Darling would recognise him. He was repaid after a long Watch, for, towards Morning, the blue Eyes opened, and the little Voice asked for "Water." *Uncle Joe* must take it to her, and no one else; and what Joy to the old Sailor, when the Child looked up, with a faint Smile, and whispered, "Kiss me, *Uncle Joe!*"

*Dr. Morgan* has been many times into the silent Nursery, and does not like the little flushed Face and the quick Pulse. The  
good

good Doctor, who has so many little ones of his own, and loves all Children, often finds his Spectacles very dim after these Visits, and we may be sure that all his Skill will be put forth on her behalf. But the fate of *Mabel* is in higher and wiser Hands than his; and *Lady Egerton* knows and feels this: and though she clings to her last Treasure with all a Mother's Love, she has Faith in her Father's Mercy, and will try to leave her Child to His care.

*Mr. Hope*, who calls every Day, has done much for *Lady Egerton*, and always leaves her comforted and composed. *Mabel* has the Scarlatina. The Angel of Death has been busy in the Village, and though she had been carefully guarded from all contact with the Peasant Children, yet Disease makes no distinction between Cottage Hearth and stately Hall, but, breathing with fervid Breath upon all alike, laid low the little Heiress of Norton Abbey.

And what does *Pop* do now? *Pop*, with  
all

all his grandeur and pomposity, is not so selfish as he seems. He does not whistle and crack his Whip now; and he has undertaken to feed *Mabel's* Birds and Rabbits. He must not see her, but he often lingers near her Door, where *Bounce* lies all Day upon the Mat; *he* knows that something is amiss with his young Mistress, and his large Eyes look very melancholy and intelligent.

*Pop* is sure to rush round the Corner, as *Dr. Morgan* is leaving the House (nearly upsetting that worthy Man), to ask after his Patient. And if the Report is not favourable, something very liquid comes into his Eye (not a *tear*, of course; it would be too girlish to weep).

The conduct of *Peg Priggins* since *Mabel's* Illness has been curious in the extreme. She often appears in the Room when you least expect her, and, gazing at the little Bed where the Child lies, exclaims, "O my! how bad she do look!"

When sent to *Dr. Morgan's* for Physic,  
*Peg*

*Peg* is generally so long away, that *Mrs. Crummie* has frequently to chide her, in spite of her oft-repeated Excuses, that the Doctor was out, or "kep her waiting." *Peg* cannot speak the Truth, and confess that she stopped at the lonely Hut of *Dame Haggins* on the bleak Common, and that *Black Ben* kept her talking in the Lane. What is most singular is the Anxiety she always manifests as to the Night arrangements in the Nursery. *Peg* often tells Nurse, *Alice*, and even *Lady Egerton*, how tired they look; and if *she* might be allowed to watch by *Mabel*, what care she would take of her.

Day after Day goes by, and *Mabel* is neither better nor worse. The Sunbeams creep through the crack in the Shutters every Morning, and play over the little Patient's Face. Every Evening, Nurse, as she lights the shaded Lamp, shakes her Head, and sighs deeply; and *Lady Egerton* steals softly in, to give orders for the Night. One Evening, *Mabel*  
was

was reported to be out of danger; and her Mother and Nurse, wearied with watching, had, at her request, left *Alice* sole Occupant of the Nursery, with injunctions to arouse them should any change take place in the Sufferer. *Uncle Joe* had looked in, the last thing before ascending to his own Room, some distance off; and, one by one, the Inhabitants of the Abbey sought their respective Dormitories, and the sounds of Life, above and below, speedily died away, and left the young Governess to the silence of the Sick Room. *Mabel* had sunk into a more peaceful Slumber than she had yet known; and Hope was reviving in the Heart of the Watcher once more—for very sad had *Alice* been since the Illness of her little Charge. How much she loved her she had never known till now. Indeed, *no one* could help loving little *Mabel*! far less *Alice*, whose Heart overflowed with kindness to all, and who had so few, so very few, in her lonely Life, to care for. Therefore had *Alice* wept many Tears lately, now that

that the silvery Laughter and the bounding Feet of the "little Sunbeam" were heard no more below. Besides, had not *Alice* sometimes grown faint-hearted at the Thoughts of once more seeking another Home? which, after all her weary Wanderings among the cold and unfeeling, was anything but a cheering prospect. *Alice* was not selfish, and perhaps her Tears were all for *Mabel*; but if a few mingled with them at the prospect of leaving her Darling and her kind Friend, *Lady Egerton*, who could blame her?

So *Alice* sat that lonely Night by the little Bed, and many a Prayer was murmured there for the recovery of the golden-headed Child. And *Mabel* slept sweetly at first, dreaming that she was gathering Daisies on the Common, and running races with *Bounce*. Perhaps it was the remembrance of the incident which had occurred there in the Summer, mingled with her feverish Dreams, that caused her to wake up, screaming that "*Black Ben* was in the Lane!"

*Alice*

*Alice* says, "You are in your own Bed, Darling, and nothing can hurt you!" and puts her own Face close to the little flushed one, and her Arms tight round her; and singing softly, *Mabel* soon falls off to Sleep again.

Do not wake again, little one, for *Black Ben* is not in the Lane, nor in his own Cottage, but nearer, perhaps, than even, in your Dreams, you have imagined him. Hush! was there not a Step on the Stairs?—No! *Bounce* and *Danger* are both asleep in the Hall, and no one could pass *them*! but stay, was that the Shadow from the Night Lamp that fell suddenly upon the Nursery floor? No! the Door gently opens, and, as *Alice* looks up, she sees the tall figure of *Black Ben* himself about to enter the Room! *Alice* sees *Black Ben* through a Crack in the Curtain, but *he* does not see *her*, and softly retires, to be succeeded the next Moment by *Peg Priggins*, who appears suddenly (as she always does), and, coming up to the Bedside, says in  
a low



a low and hurried Voice, "If you please, Miss, Mistress has sent me to ask you for the Key of her Desk." *Peg* had found out, by some means, that *Alice* had been writing Letters for *Lady Egerton* at her own Desk, which contained Bank-notes to a large amount, and had been requested to keep the Key, which *Peg*, after dropping sundry little bobs, stands waiting for.

Poor *Alice*! what could she do? If she refused to give up the Key, *Black Ben* would probably come in and relieve her of it, and that might awake *Mabel*; and to be roused in such a manner would surely be death to her! The extraordinary conduct of *Peg Priggins* was now perfectly clear to *Alice*, who had always mistrusted her. Of course, *Black Ben* had been quietly admitted by that active Damsel, and this Night had been chosen by her, when little *Mabel* only required one Watcher. Doubtless, *Peg* fancied that the quiet, timid-looking Governess would not be much in the way; but, *Peg*, you are mistaken!

mistaken ! Though she is pale and trembling, and had no idea of being a Heroine, *Alice* would give her Life sooner than her little Charge should be hurt or frightened. So having in some measure collected her scattered senses, she asks (in a Voice which was meant to be steady, but which shook a good deal), "What can your Mistress want with the Key at this Hour of the Night ? But, hush, *Margaret* ! I will give you anything, rather than waken *Mabel* ; come away to the next Room, and make no noise."

"If you please, Miss," said *Peg*, when they were outside, "*Ben Haggins* has called, and says Mistress owes him some Money, and if you will give me the Key, and go and keep quiet till the Morning, he will not come near you again."

At any other time, *Alice* would have been amused at *Peg's* polite way of announcing a Burglary ; but now a sense of her utter helplessness came over her, and what to do she knew not. She looked down the dark  
Passage,

Passage, and over the Banisters into the Hall, where *Bounce* and *Danger* lay sleeping, but breathing so very deeply, that the thought flashed across her that *Black Ben* (who was skilled in such things) must have given them something to produce the unnatural Slumber. She had not conjectured this many Moments, when she felt a rough Hand upon her Arm, and the dark Whiskers of *Black Ben* brushed her Cheek, as he said, in a hoarse Voice, "The Keys are wanted, and no time to lose."

*Alice* might have screamed or fainted as they led her into the next Room, but a thought of *Mabel* made her strong in an instant. *Peg* placed the Lantern she carried upon the Ground, as *Alice* sank upon a chair, and proceeded to search her Pocket; when, having found the Key in question, she whispered to her Companion, and seemed to be persuading him to allow the Governess to return to the Nursery. However, *Black Ben* appeared to think *Alice* must not go back

back as unfettered as she came; so *Peg* stood by, tearing the Table-cloth into strips, with which he was about to tie her Hands, and a thick Handkerchief which he rolled up was evidently intended for her Mouth.

Then *Alice* spake quietly and firmly, looking on the dark Face of the Poacher with an Eye which did not shrink, saying, "Before you put any restraint upon me, I wish to tell you that *Lady Egerton's* little Daughter (whose Life is far more valuable than anything else in this House) lies in the next Room ill. You have the Key, and why should you deprive me of the use of my Hands and Feet, which would render me useless to her? Lock me in the Nursery, and promise not to come in yourself. I entreat you to do this, because the young Lady's Life depends upon my care. *Margaret,*" she added (turning to *Peg*), "surely you will not be so ungrateful to your Mistress, and cruel to that sweet Child, as to allow her to be left alone?"

*Peg's* Face softened (there is surely *some* feeling

feeling in the most depraved Heart?) and, looking at her Companion, she said, "I can't do it, *Ben*! I am most perticular bad, but no one could go for to arm that there sick little Hangel! Miss must go back to her just as she came, and you may lock her in if you like; so come along, Man, do you hear?"

*Black Ben* looked more sullen and ferocious than ever, as he pushed *Alice* away into the Nursery, and turned the Key upon her; and *Alice*, you may be sure, both locked and bolted the Door inside, and then fell upon the Sofa, feeling very faint and giddy. Presently the little Girl grew restless, and with trembling steps *Alice* crossed the Room, and soothed her to Sleep again. Then she sat by the Bed, trying to think what she ought to do. How she wished the Nursery was not so far from *Uncle Joe* and the Butler, who both slept in another Wing of the Abbey—*Mr. Staid*, in calm repose, little thinking how his Pantry had been entered,

and his Plate neatly packed up, half an Hour ago—*Uncle Joe* dreaming of the blue Sea, and talking of *Nelson*, in his Sleep. There was *Pop*, to be sure, sleeping in a Room in the Passage leading out of the Nursery Dressing-room. *Peg* must have forgotten this Dressing-room, or else she had no fear of *Pop*. It was a long Passage to cross, and a little flight of Stairs at the end of it led to the Apartment which contained the *Hon. Plantagenet*. To descend these Stairs was a perilous undertaking, for who should say that *Peg* would not pop round the corner? But *Pop's* Window was low, and *Pop*, who made such a boast of his bravery, could surely help her!

*Mabel* was now sleeping calmly, and *Alice*, gathering up all her courage, left the Room softly, without a Light. Swiftly she glided down the Passage and the Stairs, and entered the Room, locking the Door after her. *Pop* was snoring loudly, and *Alice* shook his arm for some little time without rousing him. At last,

last, thinking it was some of "our Fellows" coming to pour a Jug of Water over him, he shouted out; "Halloo! what's the time of Day, *Tippings?*"

"It is I," said *Alice*, in a low Voice; "are you awake?"

"Of course I am! what's the Matter? Is *Mabel* worse?"

"No—I came to tell you Something; but speak low, and—you won't be frightened!"

"Do you take me for a *Girl, Miss Moore?*" said *Pop*, indignantly.

"No, you are a '*Man of Kent*' and I am a Kentish Girl, and we must do wonders together! *Pop*," said *Alice*, bending low, "there are Thieves in the House! *Black Ben!*"

How fortunate that you are in the Dark, *Pop!* no one can see your pale Face, but *Alice* can feel your Hand shake a little, and she is obliged to say again, "You are a '*Man of Kent*,' you know, and I must let you down from the Window, and you can run, in a

Moment, to the Gardener's Cottage. Dress quickly, and arouse the Farm-servants."

Ah, *Plantagenet Orlando*! what is required of you now? *You* cannot refuse, when the little Governess has done her part so well! Besides, what glory you will acquire in the Eyes of "our Fellows!" and how the romantic Adventure will gain additional Lustre from being coupled with the name of the beautiful *Alice Moore*!

So *Pop* jumped out of Bed, and, dressing with speed, felt too excited to be much frightened. There was not much danger after all; the Night was so dark, and he knew every winding of the Premises better than *Peg* or *Black Ben*. And then what a "jolly" Scene in the Morning!—*Uncle Joe* would scorn him no more as unfit for the Sea, or anything else, when he led *Alice* gracefully by the Hand, to *Lady Egerton*, exclaiming, "Behold the Deliverer of the Abbey!" So, by the time he had put his Clothes on, he had quite renounced *Lady Blanche*,



*Blanche*, and fallen violently in love with *Alice*, who would, of course, turn out to be some Countess in disguise! and in this frame of mind he was let down, or rather he hopped, from Branch to Branch of the Pear-tree trained against his Window, which seemed to *Alice* scarcely footing enough for a Cat; but *Pop* had descended it before scores of times. A slight crash into a Laurel-bush at the bottom, and a low Whistle, told her that all was right; and the next Minute the young Hero was far away, flying, and springing, and hopping about, like a Squirrel. If you could only have seen him!

Then, without allowing herself Time to think of the Staircase and the long Passage, *Alice* was thankful to find herself once more in the Nursery; and taking her Place at *Mabel's* side, counted the Minutes as they passed away. It was half-past Two—*Dr. Morgan* would be there by Six, Nurse and *Lady Egerton* at Five, and *Uncle Joe* would appear in his Dressing-gown before any of them.

them. *Alice*, Watch in Hand, sat and listened. The Clock over the Stables struck Three; then the deep Voice from the old Church gave forth the same Hour. *Mabel* was getting restless—Oh, if *Black Ben* will only keep away from her Darling's sight! Perhaps he may return for the Time-piece over the Fire-place! or—hark! there is a Noise in the Garden below, near the Side-door where *Black Ben* entered. *Alice* softly approached the Window of the Dressing-room, and saw *Peg*, with her Bonnet on, and the Lantern in her Hand, and a little Bundle, followed by *Ben Haggins*, bearing a heavier Load. With a Sigh of relief, she was just turning away, when she hears a Scream from *Peg*, a Shout from *Pop*, a Scuffle, and the tread of heavy Feet; there is just Light enough for her to discern several dark Forms closing round *Black Ben*, who has dropped his Burden. Then *Peg* dashes out the Lantern, and runs off; and the report of a Pistol startles the solitude of Night.

*Alice*

*Alice* hears no more, but, being a true Woman, of course, concludes that some one has been killed, and therefore quietly sinks upon the Floor in a Dead-faint.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE SUNBEAM PASSES AWAY.

“And the mother gave, in tears and pain,  
The flowers she most did love ;  
She knew she should find them all again  
In the fields of light above.

“Oh ! not in cruelty, not in wrath,  
The Reaper came that day ;  
’Twas an angel visited the green earth,  
And took the flowers away.”—LONGFELLOW.

“MAMMA,” said little *Mabel*, one Day,  
as she leaned upon her Mother’s Shoulder,  
“when will my Birthday come ?”

“Before very long, now, my Child,” replied *Lady Egerton*.

“Do you think I shall be well enough to make a Garland, Mamma ?”

“I cannot tell, Darling ; but you shall have one made to look at.”

“Did you ever see a Garland, *Miss Moore* ?” said *Mabel*.

“Yes, Dear. In Kent, where I used to live,  
they

they always made Garlands on May-day, and had a Queen, too."

"Were *you* ever made a Queen?"

"Oh, yes! I have often been a Queen, seated on a white Donkey, covered with Flowers, when I was a little Girl like you, *Mabel*."

"Mamma, may *I* be made a Queen, if I get better?"

Her Mother smiled sadly, and replied, "I fear, my Child, *Dr. Morgan* would not consider you strong enough to ride a Donkey by that time."

"But, Mamma, *Uncle Joe* can be the Donkey, and I can ride on his Shoulder, and need not leave the House. Why don't I get strong, Mamma? Do you think God means to take me away, like my little Sisters, who live up in the Sky?"

"I cannot tell, Darling. God can make you well, if He sees fit, or take you Home to Himself, which would be better for you, although very sad for me."

“Don’t cry, Mamma; I do not want to go away from you. I am very happy here, with you, and *Uncle Joe*, and *Miss Moore*, and my Birds; but I am very tired always now, and my Head aches, and in Heaven I shall never be ill any more, shall I, Mamma?”

“No, sweet one,” said the poor Mother, placing the little wasted Form on the Sofa, while *Alice* took the tiny Feet on her Lap, and rubbed them softly.

“Will you tell me a Story, please, *Miss Moore*,” she said presently. “I don’t want any Fairy Stories now—Fairies are not true, you know!—tell me about the little Children coming to Jesus. Do you think there were any so small as me?”

So *Alice* began to tell, in simple, childish Language, that beautiful Story, which *Mabel* had listened to so often before; and then *Alice* must sing:—

“Around the Throne of God in Heaven,  
Thousands of Children stand,”

with which she loved to be warbled to sleep.

sleep. She tried to sing too, but her Voice had got very weak lately; and to-night *Lady Egerton* thought she looked paler than ever, as she lay, with one Hand in her own, and the other thrown over the shaggy Neck of *Bounce*. But now, Nurse is at the Door, ready to carry her to Bed.

“Good Night, Mamma,” says little *Mabel*; “good Night, *Miss Moore*. Mind you both come up and see me again; and when *Uncle Joe* comes in, tell him to come and kiss me too.”

Many Days and Weeks had passed like this with the little Heiress of Norton Abbey. Every Morning saw her rise pale and languid; every Evening, as Nurse carried her Upstairs, she found her Burden lighter. *Mabel* had recovered from the Scarlet Fever, after a severe Illness, but having taken Cold the next Month (which was March), it had settled on her Lungs; and though *Lady Egerton* had wished, at first, to take her from Norton to a warmer Climate, *Dr. Morgan* now feared that any removal would only hasten

hasten her Death. And, so, Day by Day, they watched her fade away; and as her Cheek paled, and her Form grew more fragile, her Mind seemed to expand, and her happy Spirit to brighten and ripen for Heaven, until, as Nurse said, "she only seemed waiting for Wings to fly away."

And poor *Lady Egerton* was now trying to give up her last Darling without a murmur, and to say—

"'Tis sweet, as Year by Year we lose  
Friends out of sight, in Faith to muse  
How grows in Paradise our Store!"

for, as her little Girl said, she had already two Baby-sisters "up in the Skies."

April was passing rapidly away, yet not more rapidly than little *Mabel*, who had been looking forward to May-day; and it seemed doubtful if she would live to see her Eighth Birthday. She was now too weak to be brought into the Drawing-room, and lay, all through the brightening April Days, patient and happy on her little Bed, sometimes quite still,



still, and sometimes talking of her Pets, and how they would be cared for when she was gone.

“Mamma,” she said, “*Uncle Joe* may have *Danger*; and, *Miss Moore*, you may have *Bounce*, because you will be very kind to him, and take him sometimes the walks we used to go—will you, *Miss Moore*? *Pop* may have all my Birds; and give him my Love, Mamma, and tell him to be a good Boy and not tease *Miss Pry’s* Cats, and not make Faces at Church any more. And will you give *Daft Eliza* her Breakfast every week, Mamma?—and, Mamma, when I am gone away, you will be very dull without your little Girl! You will not send *Miss Moore* from you, because she will comfort you—won’t you, *Miss Moore*? May she stay always?”

“Yes?”

“Oh, I am so glad! Promise me to stay with Mamma, *Miss Moore*; and come both of you sometimes, and bring some Flowers, to my Grave? You will not put me in that dark Place  
where

where they put poor Papa, dear Mamma? I want to be buried in the Sunshine. I want to have a *green* Grave, where the *Daisies* can grow, Mamma." And little *Mabel*, tired of speaking so much, fell back exhausted on her Pillow.

It was the last Day of April, when *Uncle Joe* had been out all Day in the Woods and Fields to look for Flowers; for who should perform the Darling's last Wish but himself?

The tasteful Hand of *Alice* had woven a bright and fragrant Garland, but her Tears fell thick and fast over the fair Blossoms, as she thought that ere *they* faded the little one who loved them might herself have passed away.

And so *Mabel's* Birthday came—a bright beautiful May-day. *Alice* and *Uncle Joe* carried the Garlands to her Bedside. The heavy Eyelids were lifted up for a Minute, and the Eyes (looking so Blue and strangely large in the wasted Face) lighted up with Pleasure.

"It is very lovely!" said the Child. "Thank you,

you, dear *Uncle Joe* and *Miss Moore*. Kiss me. It will do to put upon my Grave. Mamma, the Flowers will never die in Heaven, will they?"

After that, she lay very quiet, and told her Mother she thought the "Angels would come for her in the Night." *Lady Egerton* thought so too, but Nurse said "the Darling would live to see another Sunrise."

All through the long Hours of that last Watch did *Alice*, *Uncle Joe*, and her Mother, sit beside her, listening to every painful Breath, and almost longing for the release of the Spirit from the little suffering Body. About Three o'clock she whispered, "I am very tired, Mamma; but Jesus will carry me now!" And she never spoke again.

And then the Sun rose: the bright Beams of that May Morning came streaming into the Room, and little *Mabel* opened her Eyes, smiled up into her Mother's Face, and passed away, with a flood of golden Light pouring full upon her. Nurse was right. She just  
lived

lived to see the break of another Day, and then the Angels, who had been waiting for the happy Spirit, carried it Home to the Saviour who loves little Children.

And so she died. As the crimson Sun was mounting the blue Heavens, *Mabel* passed away from the old Abbey, the stately Home of her Fathers, to a fairer Inheritance. It was meet that she should thus pass away from earth. It was quite meet that little *Mabel*, so bright and joyous—herself a perfect Sunbeam, who loved Flowers and Birds, and all that was beautiful and happy—should go Home to the Mansion of Light in a flood of Sunshine. *Lady Egerton* thought so, as, with a calm Smile, she kissed the peaceful Face and folded the little Hands so gently. *Alice* thought so as she put back the golden Curls and pressed her lips to the white Forehead. *Uncle Joe* thought so as he led his Niece out of the Room, saying solemnly, “Thus He giveth His beloved Sleep!”

CHAPTER



## CHAPTER VI.

MR. HOPE FINDS THE RECTORY UNFURNISHED.

“Where shall we make her grave ?  
Oh ! where the wild flowers wave,  
In the free air !  
Where shower and singing bird  
’Mid the young leaves are heard !  
There—lay her there !”

“Wrapt in a cloud of glorious dreams,  
She breathes and moves alone,  
Pining for those bright bowers and streams  
Where her beloved is gone.  
Let her depart !”—MRS. HEMANS.

“WELL, he *is* an active Man in a quiet way !” said *Rose Morgan* to *Jessie* ; “ he has only been here six Months, and there is the Church getting on finely !”

“ And how beautiful it will be, *Rose* !—nothing common or paltry about it, everything Solid and good, just what a Church *should* be ! And then he is going to give all the deaf old People the Pews near the Pulpit ; he says the Aged should be thought  
of

of first: and no one seems to mind it! *Mr. Hope* certainly has a way of getting over People! Aunt says he does things by Witch, or rather Wizard-craft."

"Yes, *Jessie*, what an Outcry there was, at first, about the Church being altered! *Miss Pry* said every one would go off to Chapel; but, you know, the School was so crowded, he was obliged to have three Services a Day!"

"I think he is just the Man for Norton; he is so judicious and kind to People, even when he cannot agree with them. He does not make a *Noise* about what he does; but Papa says *he* knows more of his movements than most People, for there is not a Sick-bed in the Place that he does not meet him at: and he was up the whole Night with that dreadful Drunkard *Smith*, after his Sunday duties—(Papa said it was the most fearful Death he ever witnessed)—and on Monday Evening, when the 'King's Head' was full, *Mr. Hope* walked straight

straight in, and told all the People how poor *Smith*, who was once the most respectable Man in the Village, had died raving Mad from Drink."

"How dreadful!" said *Jessie*. "I do think *Mr. Hope* is doing a great deal of good."

"How was it," asked *Rose*, presently, "that he got Money enough to lay out on the Church?"

"Well, I think I know, for I happened to be at the Abbey one Morning when *Mr. Hope* and *Lady Egerton* were having a Battle about who should find the Money! The Rector said that was all settled—that a Friend of his particularly wished to do it. *Lady Egerton* said that was not fair; it had always been her Wish and Intention to do it herself when there should come a Clergyman to Norton who desired it. *Mr. Hope* said he would resign it on no account, and *Lady Egerton* said it was hard that *she*, who owned so much Property in the Place, should not have the

the privilege of doing something for the Church. It was at last settled (though very reluctantly by *Mr. Hope*) that she should contribute half; and then, you know, *Miss Chirp* and others wished to give something; and I must say they have all done very well." (*Jessie* did not know, when she remarked this, that *Mrs. Morgan* and her Daughters had all gone without new Winter Bonnets, that they might give a handsome Donation to this object.)

One lovely Evening in July, three Persons stood within the old Church at Norton, whose Interior was rapidly becoming as beautiful as the Outside. They were *Lady Egerton*, in deep Mourning, pale and drooping, leaning on the Arm of *Alice*, and *Mr. Hope*, whose face wore an expression of quiet satisfaction.

The last Notes of the fine Organ, which *Helen* had been playing with a skilful Hand (for she had now undertaken to lead the Village Choir, and instruct the Children in Music),



Music) had died away. She had left the Church—the Workmen were gone long ago—and the three, remaining, stood opposite a beautiful East Window, which had just been put in by *Lady Egerton*, in memory of her little Girl. A severe Illness had followed the Death of *Mabel*, and her Mother, always delicate, now looked a mere Wreck of what she had been. *Alice* had become indispensable to her Comfort, and tended her with the most Affectionate care; and the dying Wish of the sweet Child seemed to link them firmly together. This was the first time the bereaved Mother had left the Abbey since the Form of her Darling had been carried to the Churchyard, and her first Visit must be to that little Grave.

So they had been to see where she was laid, according to her own pretty childish Wish, in the warm Corner “where the Sunbeams came.” The little Grave was already green, and covered with Daisies—those simple Flowers, so like *Mabel* herself, in their innocent

cent happiness. The Tears of *Alice* fell fast over their white Blossoms; *Mr. Hope* was much moved; but *Lady Egerton*, serene and calm, only raised her Eyes to the deep blue Sky, and murmured, "Happy little Sun-beam!" Little was said by any of them. The Window was lovely, the gentle Mourner remarked; and everything had been done as she wished. In truth, the Colours were rich and gorgeous, and the subjects happily chosen.

*Alice* noticed one Group, on which the Mother's Eye rested fondly: it was the little Children being brought to Jesus. The Sun came streaming down upon that Band of Infants, the Mothers crowding round, and the Disciples behind. *Alice* thought that the one on whom the Saviour's Hand rested so lovingly had golden Hair, and a sweet Smile, like *Mabel's*.

"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven!" said the Rector, as they turned away.

\* \* \* \* \*

A Week

A Week after this, *Alice* was sitting on an old Tree, in a Meadow near the Rectory, which commanded a fine View of the Church, the ivied House, with its old gables, and a bit of the Abbey. *Mr. Hope* came suddenly upon her, and, after a few Words (for he never said much), stood watching the rapid strokes of her Pencil upon the Sketch before her.

"There, I must finish it to-morrow," she said, at length, rising. "*Lady Egerton* will be wanting me to read to her."

"Allow me to look at it," said the Rector, —and then, in a few Minutes, he added, "The Church is perfect, the Abbey very fair, but there is something wanting at the Rectory."

"I daresay," replied *Alice*: "Chimney and other things. It is not nearly finished."

"There is something wanted at the Rectory," he repeated, fixing his kind, serious Eyes upon her Face. "I don't know how to make fine Speeches, *Miss Moore*, but, ever since

since my Mother died, I have been very lonely. No one but you can supply her Place to me. If you will be my Wife, I think I may say I will love you as much as one Human Being may love another, without making an Idol of her."

"*Mr. Hope*," said *Alice*, looking up in his Face with her large honest Eyes, "I have a great regard for you—indeed I have. I never *can* forget your Kindness to me when I had no Friends; but," she continued, looking down, "I cannot leave *Lady Egerton*—I promised little *Mabel* I would not leave her poor Mother. You will understand me, I know. She has treated me like a Daughter, and I trust I am useful to her. I hope I have not pained you; and let me still regard you as a dear Friend. Good bye, *Mr. Hope*," she added, giving him her Hand.

He put it to his Lips, saying, "God bless you, *Miss Moore*! Good evening." And then, walking calmly Home, he entered his Study,

Study and finished his Sermon for next Sunday.

\* \* \* \* \*

How was it that the Rector, who always rather shunned the society of Ladies, came to think about marrying? If he liked, he might have answered, that it was no sudden Thought; for, ever since that Night when the little Governess, weeping and affrighted, came to take shelter with his Mother, he had longed for a Home to offer her. He had said to himself, "You are not a Ladies'-man, *Arthur Hope*, and you have never thought of a Wife before, but if you cannot win *Alice Moore*, you will never try any one else." And now she had refused him, her first Friend, for *Lady Egerton*, whom she had only known a few Months! She could not care for him, or she would not have spoken so calmly. He did not think the worse of her, for clinging to the lonely Widow in her sorrow,—but he had

L

better

better not think of her at all ; so he would go in and finish his Sermon.

But *Alice*, as she hurried back through the Park, did not feel quite so composed. Was she in Love with *Mr. Hope* ? No, certainly not ; at least, she was not an Hour ago. The idea of his having any feeling for her beyond Friendship, had never entered her Head before ; but now *Alice* felt that if there *was* any one she *could* have loved, it was himself. He was just the Man whom she could revere, she thought ; the only Man she would not mind vowing to “love, honour, and obey.” And then to have a Home of her own ! “*Home*” was a sweet Word to the young Governess ; and, as *Alice* thought of the peaceful Rectory, and the Schools, and the poor People, that little scheme of ending her Days with *Helen*, in a pretty Cottage, seemed to fade away ; for could she not play at Chess every Evening with *Mr. Hope*, in their own Room ?

However, *Alice Moore* had been accustomed  
from

from early Youth to sacrifice her own Pleasure to the Comfort of others. Little *Mabel's* pleading Voice, "You will not leave Mamma?" was still sounding in her Ears, and she felt that if she could minister in the slightest degree to the Happiness of *Lady Egerton*, she would not think of her own.

"How very coolly he took it!" she mused to herself; "I suppose he only wanted a Wife to make him comfortable, like other Men, and will soon forget me. No doubt, he will be looking out for some one else, to tack his Sermons together, and warm his Slippers! One of the *Morgans* would make him a very useful Wife." And with something like a Sigh, *Alice* entered the House.

"What is the matter with you? you look flushed, and not quite yourself, Love!" said *Lady Egerton*, as *Alice* was making the Tea a little while afterwards.

"It is hot this Evening," she replied. "I have been sketching in the Rectory Meadow."

"Well, Dear, and what then?"

"Nothing," answered *Alice* ; " only *Mr. Hope* came and looked over me—and—he sent his kind Regards to you."

" And was *that* all?" said *Lady Egerton*, fixing her soft Eyes upon the blushing Girl.

It must have been very hot indeed, she thought, to judge from the Colour of the Face bent over the Cups, but then Tea-making is a warm Occupation in Summer.

" Come, Dear, I see how it is," she continued kindly ; " You need not fear to tell me ; I suspected it long ago ; he will make you a good Husband, *Alice*, and you will be a true loving Wife to him, as you have been like a sweet Daughter to me."

" O, *Lady Egerton* ! my kind Friend ! you mistake ; I cannot leave you ; I have just told him so."

*Lady Egerton* rose, and placing her Hand upon the bent Head of *Alice*, said, " Look up, *Alice Moore*, look me full in the Face, and answer me truly, Do you love *Arthur Hope* or not ?"

*Mabel's*



*Mabel's* Governess was a poor Hand at deceiving, and she replied very reluctantly, while the Tears came into her Eyes, "I could love him, *Lady Egerton*, but indeed I never wish to leave you; do not send me from you."

"*Alice*," said the other gravely, "the Affection of a Man like *Mr. Hope* is not to be cast lightly away. I have loved you strangely, although we have known each other so short a time, and I could wish no greater earthly Happiness for you, than to see you united to so good a Man. I will not send you from *me*, but *I* shall leave you before very long, and it would delight me beyond measure to provide you with such a Protector. *Alice*, my Days here will not be many now. I shall I trust soon join my little *Mabel* in that world where no Farewells are spoken,—but you, my young Friend, have much to do upon Earth, and may you do it well and wisely, and may we all meet at last in the Kingdom of our Father."

*Alice*

*Alice* could not speak for some Time after this ; it was so new to her to think that the Mother was passing away like her Child ! though she had long felt uneasy at the constant Cough and great Weakness of her kind Friend. She threw herself on a low Stool, at the Feet of that beloved Form, and said in a broken voice, “ Oh, *Lady Egerton* ! I love you so very much ! I don’t remember my Mother, but I think she must have been like you. Never speak of my leaving you again, oh ! do not grieve me by it any more.”

*Lady Egerton* kissed the Brow of the weeping Girl, and whispered, “ God bless you, my Child, we will leave it in His Hands.”

However, as *Lady Egerton* grew weaker, her desire for the Happiness of *Alice* increased, and she sent for *Mr. Hope*, and they were betrothed in her presence ; only *Alice* stipulated, that she should never leave her kind Friend while she lived. And so they  
were

were engaged to each other, but it was to be kept very quiet, and no one knew anything about it, not even *Miss Pry* !

One Evening when *Lady Egerton*, feeling rather better than usual, had been walking on the Terrace, and was about to enter the House, she descried the Rector with hasty Strides coming towards them, his usual calm and dignified bearing changed for an anxious and discomposed Manner.

“ What can be the matter with *Arthur* ? ” exclaimed *Alice* ; “ he has actually leaped that Fence ! I never knew him hurry about anything before ! ”

After a hasty Greeting, *Mr. Hope*, addressing *Lady Egerton*, began : “ Are you strong enough to hear strange News this Evening, or shall I impart it to *Alice* alone ? for it concerns you both.”

*Alice*, seeing the faint Colour in the Face of her Friend fade away, made a sign for him to stop ; but *Lady Egerton* said calmly, “ You may speak, *Mr. Hope* ; I think there is  
nothing

nothing now which would excite or injure me. What has happened?"

"It is that unhappy Woman *Dame Haggins*," answered the Rector, "who is dying fast, and is extremely anxious to see you both directly. I told her of the state of your Health, but she replied the Secret she could tell would be enough to bring you from your Grave to hear; and added, that she could expect no Peace until it was off her Mind; and if you would not increase the Horrors of her Death-bed, she bade me hasten you to her Cottage."

The Invalid, who had listened attentively, made no reply to this; but *Alice* said presently, "It sounds very mysterious, certainly, but it may be only to get Money out of us; and I have been told by several People, that *Dame Haggins* professes to know more about many Families of Rank, than they know themselves. You will not think of going, dear *Lady Egerton*? but if you will allow me, I will return with *Arthur* to the Common.

mon. Has the poor Creature any one with her, pray?"

"I only found out Yesterday, by accident, that she was ill," he answered. "I went directly and found her quite alone, in a most wretched State. I sent *Dr. Morgan* at once: he says she cannot live many Days, and may not live through the Night. I tried all over the Village to get a Nurse to sit up with her, but could not obtain one. She has the character of being a Witch, and People are afraid to go alone. Last night *Miss Chirp* volunteered to sit up with her. I have at length met with a Woman who will take care of her; and am grieved indeed that the foolish Superstition of my People should have prevented them from performing a simple Act of Charity.—What do you say, *Lady Egerton*? shall I take *Alice*? I must tell you she wished most to unburden her Mind to you."

"I will certainly go," she replied; "I feel unusually strong this Evening, and the air is

balmy ; besides, I have a strange feeling that I *ought* to go. It may be weak, but I have been dreaming incessantly of my dead Sister, and *Alice Moore* ; mixing them up always together ; and I have fancied lately that the former looked reproachfully at me ; all, no doubt, the effects of a disturbed and broken rest—it can be nothing else—added to the strong resemblance *Alice* bears to my Sister. It would be unkind not to visit the poor Woman, though she cannot possibly know anything of my Family.”

“Has she never lived with any of you ?” asked *Mr. Hope*.

“Never,” answered *Lady Egerton*. “I believe she only came into the Village about Nine Years ago, and I had no acquaintance with her before. What did she tell *you*, *Alice*, when you took shelter on the Common with my lost Darling ?”

“Only that she could tell me a Secret, in exchange for Gold ; and she asked me how I came by the Scar on my Wrist. But what  
*is*

is strange," continued *Alice*, "is, that ever since the Night when *Black Ben* and *Peg Priggins* robbed the House, I have lost a small Box, containing Letters belonging to my Mother, and her Picture."

"Order the Carriage, if you please, *Mr. Hope*," said *Lady Egerton*, with energy. "I am excited, I confess," she added to *Alice*; "but nothing can harm me so much now as suspense."

"Dear *Lady Egerton*!" implored the anxious Girl, "let me go without you; this will be too much for you, indeed it will!"

"Nothing can happen without the knowledge of God, *Alice*; die I must before long, but I believe it is His will that something yet remains for me to do, and I believe that *something* concerns you."

The Carriage came to the Door, and they were soon rolling away, through the Park, up the Village, and beyond it to the dreary Common. How changed were the feelings of the Party when they returned an Hour afterwards, to the old Abbey!

CHAPTER



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CONFESSIONS OF DAME HAGGINS.

"'Tis strange ! 'tis passing strange."—*Hamlet*.

THE little Gate creaked on its Hinges as they walked slowly up to the deserted-looking Cottage. *Alice* thought of *Black Ben*, and clung to *Mr. Hope*. *Lady Egerton* leaned upon his other Arm, and trembled from Weakness and Excitement.

The old crazy Door groaned and squeaked as they entered, the Dog barked loud, and the black Cats flew up a bare Tree near the Window of their dying Mistress; but within the Room, so cold and unfurnished, were Smiles and Sunshine; for there sat *Teresa Chirp*, making Arrowroot in a queer looking little Saucepan. Coming forward to meet  
them,



them, she placed *Lady Egerton* upon her Chair, gave the other to *Alice*, and sat upon the Stool herself,—where little *Mabel*, a few Months ago, had watched the Storm and longed to get away from *Dame Haggins*.

The Presence of *Miss Chirp* was a Relief to all. There was something so comfortable, and soothing, and neat about her, that she made a Home even of that dreary Apartment.

“I am so glad you are come back, *Mr. Hope*,” said the little Woman; “the poor Creature has been groaning and muttering, and praying for your return: may we all be delivered from such a Conscience as she seems to have; though I would not judge her harshly. I will go and tell her of your arrival,—and see! at her request, I have prepared Pen and Paper for you to take down what she seems so anxious to make known.”

In a few Minutes they stood around the miserable Bed, on which lay the Mother of *Black Ben*. Her Form was shriveled and  
wasted,

wasted, but her Eye was bright and piercing still; and, in a Voice so shrill and strong that it astonished her Visitors, she called out to *Miss Chirp* (who was about to leave the Room), "Stay, will ye! You who was the only one to come to me, stay and hear *who* it is ye've been tending Night and Day,—hear my Secret out, which shall be a Secret no longer, for if I don't live to tell it, I should never lie easy in the Ground." Then she added, "Look under the Bed and you'll find a Box; look into the Box and you'll find a Parcel; open the Parcel and you'll find a Picture—give it to my Lady there, and ask her if she ever saw any one like it afore? show it to the young Lady, and ask, Does she know who it was took for? Ah! open it easy enough *now*," continued the old Woman, with anger; "*Ben* has been and gone off with all! What's the use of living for Gold, Gold, Gold! if it's to be spent by the likes of him! It's Gold that made me what I am—and Gold that's robbed me of my peace—and  
Gold

Gold that *he's* robbed his old Mother of; but it's *not* Gold that'll make me die easy!—more Fool I, to set so much store by it!”

While the wretched Woman was going on in this strain, *Miss Chirp* and *Mr. Hope* had taken the Parcel from the Box under the Bed, which, they noticed, had once had very strong Fastenings, but was now broken open. Following her directions, the Rector took the Miniature from its hiding-place, and presented it to *Lady Egerton*.

“My own and only Sister!” she exclaimed, pressing it to her Lips.

“My sweet dead Mother!” said the bewildered *Alice*, at the same Moment. “The very Picture I missed from my Dressing-case!”

“Come to me, *Alice*!” said *Lady Egerton*, faintly—“My Sister's Child! my adopted Daughter! it is as I dreamed, yet scarcely dared to hope! I cannot tell how; it is all dim to me yet, but I *felt* long ago that you belonged to me.”

“Now

“Now listen,” said the old Woman, “while I make it clear as the Sunshine to you; and young Miss! turn away from me, if you will, but I was not *always* the Creature that I am now! I have rocked you to Sleep many a time, in these skinny Arms; and tended ye on the wide Sea for many a long Week, and should have took you safe to my Lady there, only I was trusted with the Gold, and the Temptation was too strong. It’s Gold that’s been my ruin, Body and Soul! and Gold that’s dragging me down!” continued the dying Woman, with a shriek.

After this, *Dame Haggins* growing more feeble, and *Lady Egerton* becoming faint, and unable to listen, it was thought better that *Alice* should return with her to the Abbey; while *Mr. Hope* remained to take down an explanation of the strange Information which they had received at the Cottage.

So they entered the Carriage, and the loving Arms of *Alice* fast locked around her Aunt, whose drooping Head rested on the Breast

Breast where little *Mabel* had loved to lean : these Two, who ought never to have been parted, and who were now so strangely united, still possessing no legal proof of their Relationship to each other, felt that they needed none, because their Hearts had told them long ago that they belonged to the same Family. Very quietly they passed through the Park. Very still was *Lady Egerton's* pale Face ; happy and calm felt *Alice*, the longing in the Soul of the lonely Orphan for a Mother's Love seemed to be satisfied. They were both thinking of the same thing, as they stopped opposite a tiny Flower-bed, which had once been weeded by little Hands ; and though they heard not the rustling of her Wings, who shall say that the Spirit of *Mabel* was not hovering near, to rejoice with the two Beings she had loved so much ?

The next Day, *Lady Egerton* (being too weak to come down Stairs) was lying on a Sofa in her Dressing-room, when, calling  
*Alice*

*Alice* to her Side, she showed her a Picture of the same sweet Face as that which had been recovered from *Dame Haggins* the Day before, only that it was younger,—being the Features of a Girl of about seventeen, with a smiling Mouth, and merry dark Eyes.

“Here is your Mother, *Alice*, looking joyous and gay as when I last saw her; and as she *must* be your Mother, although the Fact of your Birth was unknown to me, I will now fulfil my Promise, and tell you all I can remember of the early History of my beloved Sister; but first, (I wonder how I never came to ask you before,) do you know *nothing* of your own Parents?”

“Very little,” answered *Alice*; “I have often questioned my Grandmother, and she has told me that she knew nothing herself of my Mother, but that my Father was a gallant Officer, who was killed in Battle in India: that my Mother died a few Weeks afterwards, and that I was sent Home when still an Infant. From old *Bridget*, my Nurse,  
I have

I have gathered that the Marriage of my Parents was distasteful to the Friends of both Parties, as my Mother's Family were proud and of high Rank, and my Father's (then Roman Catholics) were equally displeased with their Son for marrying a Protestant. I remember once, just before my Grandmother died, she expressed Regret that she knew none of my Mother's Relations; adding, however, that they had cast off their Daughter long ago, and so perhaps they would not own her Child, more especially as she was not possessed of the legal Proofs of my Birth. She bade me treasure my Mother's Picture, and remember that she was a *Trevellian* of Cornwall; a Name which she had for Years failed to discover. Of course, dear Aunt, it never struck me that *you*, settled here, so far away, should be one of that Family, though why, I don't know; besides, I had long ago given up the Hope of finding any Relations who would claim me; and having some of my Father's  
Pride

Pride about me, and having received a good Education, I much preferred a Life of Independence."

"*Alice*," said *Lady Egerton*, "perhaps the old Nurse you speak of can give us some Clue to your History ; did she live with you in India ?"

"Oh, no!" answered her Niece, "she never left my Grandmother, with whom she had lived nearly all her Life."

"Still," said *Lady Egerton*, "if you know where to find her, I should wish her to be sent for without Loss of Time. And now listen to me, Dear, while I tell you something of the early History of your Mother.

"My Father, *Sir Francis Trevellian*, an old Cornish Baronet, married a Daughter of the former *Earl of Courtland*; and myself and your Mother were their only Children. I need not tell you of our Attachment to each other, of our happy Childhood, and girlish Wanderings along that wild rocky Coast which skirted the old Mansion where we first saw the



the Light. My Sister *Mabel* was three Years my senior, and of a daring, high-spirited Nature; and I, always a timid and delicate Child, looked up to her as to a superior Being. When she was only seventeen the first Cloud of Sorrow arose in our hitherto happy Life. My Father wished her to marry a rich Nobleman, who was almost his own Age, and not the least calculated to make her happy. *Mabel* refused; and my stern Father grew angry, and treated her with harshness and neglect. My Mother, though equally anxious for this Alliance, liked not the pale Cheek and subdued Spirits of her once joyous Child; and so *Mabel* was sent away to stay with a Relation in Ireland; and it was hoped that on her Return she would conform to her Father's Wishes. *Mabel* was beautiful and thoughtless, yet it never struck my Parents, that there could be any Danger in sending a young Girl, for the first Time, so far from Home. Great therefore was their dismay,  
when

when she had been away three Months, and was soon expected to return, to hear one Morning that their wilful Daughter had eloped with a young Officer, whose Regiment had been stationed near. The next Day, a Letter came from the young Bride herself, imploring the Forgiveness of her Parents; and assuring them that she never could have been happy with *Lord*——, and so she had given her youthful Affections to a brave young Officer, and wanted nothing but their Approbation to complete her Happiness: I cannot describe to you the Disappointment, Anger, and Grief of her Mother and Father. Indeed it was Years before they recovered from the Shock. I think my Mother might have relented, but my Father forbade her Name ever to be mentioned again, and vowed he would never forgive, or own her for a Daughter, more. All the Letters that came from her were returned unopened. The only one I ever received (through an old Servant) after she had been abroad two  
Years,

Years, spoke of her Happiness with a kind Husband, and her longing to receive Tidings from Home. She said also, if she should ever be blessed with a little Child, it was her intention to send it over to me, hoping by that means to soften the Heart of her Father. A Year after that, we heard that *Captain Moore* had been killed in Indian warfare, and that his Wife had only survived him a few Weeks. And so I lost my only Sister, whose Memory is yet very dear to me. I married, a few Years after that, *Sir Digby Egerton*; a Husband chosen by my Father, for the Heiress of his large Fortune; and I have lived in this Village Fifteen Years, *Alice*; and you, my Sister's Child, will be restored to your Birthright, I trust, before I quit it."

Weary with so much speaking, the Invalid sank upon her Pillow, and it was not until the Evening that she was sufficiently recovered to peruse the Paper which *Mr. Hope* had taken down at the Bedside of *Dame Haggins*.

"I was the Wife of a Soldier in the  
Regiment

Regiment of *Captain Moore*, who was a kind Gentleman, and beloved by all his Men. When I had been in India two Years, my Husband died of Fever, and the *Captain's* Wife, a beautiful young Lady of high Family, took me as her Servant. She did not know what a Serpent she was treating so kindly! and, though I robbed her whenever I had an opportunity, I was too sharp to let her find me out; and then the Niggers were such Thieves, that it always went for them. Well, the Master was ordered up the Country to fight, when little Miss was only two Months old, and he never came back again. He was killed on the Field of Battle, like a brave Gentleman, as he was. The *Captain's* Lady never got over the shock of his Death, but pined away, and followed him in less than six Weeks. Before she died, however, all her Thoughts seemed about little Miss, and how she should get safe to England, to her Relations in Cornwall. There was a Friend of the Master's, who had been wounded,

wounded, and was coming home; and he undertook to take charge of the little Girl, and I was to be her Nurse. I shall never forget how the poor Lady entreated him to watch over the Child of his Friend, and only to give it up to her Sister in Cornwall. With her dying Hand, too, she wrote Letters to her Parents (but they never saw a Line of them). Then she died; and they buried her in that wild Country, near the Fort, and close to a Hindoo Temple, far away from the Captain. I cut off a long golden Curl from my Lady's poor Head, before they laid her there, so lonesome; and the Night before we sailed, I tied her Mother's Hair round the Baby's Arm (I knew it was Gold that would do her more good than the kind I took away from her). Then we set sail for England; but on the Voyage, Master's Friend, who had been badly wounded, died quite sudden, and I was left alone with the Child, and all the Papers belonging to her. The Captain would have sealed them up, with the Gentleman's

own Property, but I made him believe they was in my care, to be delivered up with little Miss. So I read all those Papers, and studied them Night and Day, and found they spake of Money and Jewels, to be kept for the Child. (Master had had the care of a native Prince, and had come by Treasure to a large amount.) All this was in my possession, and then it was the Temptation came strong upon me to keep them, and to get rid of little Miss, whose Birth, I found out, was not known to the grand Folks in Cornwall, but only to old *Mrs. Moore*, Master's Mother. Often and often I wished she would fall sick and die; but I could not find it in my Heart to harm her myself. Well, my covetous nature, and the desire for that Wealth, grew stronger every Day; and we was landed at last on the English Coast. I knew *Mrs. Moore* had left Ireland, and where she lived in Kent, and I longed to get rid of the Child, and to make off with the Money. So I took little Miss to her, giving her only a  
Letter

Letter from her Son, which could not betray me, and all his Books. I said I was going back to India with some more Children, and didn't stop a Night under her Roof. I went to Weymouth after that, and set up a Public-house; but nothing prospered with me. I married a Smuggler, named *Haggins*, and when he died, I came here with my Son *Ben*. I liked this lone Cottage, and *Ben* liked it, too. It was not till *Peg Priggins* went to the Abbey that I found out who *Lady Egerton* was; and it was not till *Miss Moore* came and took shelter here, that I began to suspect, from the Scar on her Wrist, that she was the *Captain's* Daughter. That Scar was made by a native Servant out of revenge, because she was going to be turned away for stealing. She put a Ring into the Fire below ('Bangles' they call them out there), and brought it up red-hot, and put it on the Baby's Wrist. I heard her scream, and took it off myself in a Moment. I have the Marks on my Fingers still. My

Master and Mistress gave me a handsome Present for so doing, and the Lady always called me a 'faithful Creature,' after that! Still, I couldn't be sure, till *Peg* brought me the Picture of her Mother, and a packet of Letters. I wish to return them all now, with the Papers I have had so long; the Marriage Certificate of my Master and Mistress, and the Register of Miss's Baptism; all of which I kept, hoping some Day to turn them into Money. *Ben* broke into my strong Box, and took all the Gold, and made off in the Scuffle, after they had robbed the Abbey. And I am a miserable old Woman! a wretched, lonely old Creature!"

*Mr. Hope* was long in taking down the Confession of this unhappy Woman, who, however, lived several Days longer. He was constantly with her; but his sad Face of Disappointment as he announced her Death, told *Alice* that it had not been a satisfactory one.

And so *Alice Moore*, the modest young Governess,



Governess, turned out to be some one, after all! It was no Fancy of *Uncle Joe's*, when he discovered a likeness between *Mabel* and herself! After the Death of his Darling, *Uncle Joe* could not stay at the Abbey, so he was gone far away on a Voyage to China, and was not there to rejoice with *Lady Egerton* over this newly discovered Relation.

Although the legal proofs required to reinstate *Alice* into the Family were found, her Aunt wished still to know something of the *Moores*; and, at length, old *Bridget* arrived.

Great was the delight of the Irish Nurse on beholding her young Lady again; and great her Joy to find that she had turned out to belong to the "great Folk," after all. Not that she was the least surprised, however; "For hadn't she been dhreaming of her every Night at the same Hour for a Week past! and wasn't she sure there was Luck in store for her Jewel!"

*Lady Egerton*, wishing to hear something  
of

of her Master's Family, questioned her on the Subject, and the faithful old Creature broke out into the following Panegyric on the *Moores* of Killcranny :

“ Och, me Lady! it's proud I'll be to speak up for those that's dead and gone; for the *Moores* of Killcranny Castle, County Wicklow, were a fine Race! with the rale Irish Blood in them! I lived with them ever since I was a Slip of a Gal, and my Parents were bred and born on the Estate. Young *Master D'Arcy* was their only Child, and the Light of their Eyes. There wasn't a braver or handsomer Lad in all the Country, nor one that had a softer Heart for poor Creatures round him. It was the young Master that would go amongst them when the Famine and the Fever was busy in the place; and it was himself that had ever a blithe Word for Rich and Poor. Well, it went nigh to break the Heart of the Mistress, when he went away to join the Red-coats, but his Spirit was too high to be chained down to Killcranny. Not long after that,

that, a Letter came to say he had married a beautiful young English Lady, and would the Master receive them at the Castle? The young Lady was a Protestant, and the Master was a Papist (though the Mistress turned after he died). So the Master was angry like, and then the Family of the young Lady was all up against us (though they *needn't* have been, for the *Moores* of Killcranny Castle was as good as any Family in England! asking your Ladyship's Pardon for the same). The Master said, if *they* were proud, he could be proud too; and he'd have no Daughter that wasn't of the true Faith. So the Darlint never crossed his Father's Threshold after, and the poor young Things sailed away to Foreign Parts, where they both died. Before that, the Country was getting low, and the Master couldn't get his Rints. The *Moores* of Killcranny were always poor (though they were a fine race for all that). The Master died, poor Gentleman, and the old Place was sold, and the Mistress, and I, *Bridget O'Connor*,  
came

came to live in England (which is a dacent Place, but not like the ould Country). It was a green Village in Kent, and little Miss always called herself a Kentish Girl. A strange Woman, a Soldier's Wife, brought *Miss Alice* over the Water, and the Mistress brought her up, and loved her dearly for the sake of *Master D'Arcy*; and it's I that could have kissed the Ground she trod on; for hadn't she got the young Master's Eyes, whom I've rocked to Sleep many a Time?—bless her purty Face! It's got as many good Looks from the *Moores*, as from *your* Family, asking your Pardon, my Leddy; and it's not many Families in England who can hold a Candle to the *Moores* of Killcranny, County Wicklow."



## CHAPTER VIII.

HOW LORD PERCY FITZ-LOFTUS PROSPERED IN HIS WOOING.

“The Lordies of King Gunthie’s court,  
Required the hero’s name,  
And whence the bold and noble Knight,  
And why he hither came !”

“But let me dare to tell you, if you sat upon a throne,  
You should not call this maiden, so beautiful, your own.”

*Lay of the Nibelungen.*

“AND she is passing away, slowly yet surely,” thought *Alice*, as she stood at the Window of the spacious Drawing-room ; “I had just found her, my own sweet Aunt, and I must lose her so soon ! Everything and everyone that I get very fond of, is sure to die ! Oh, *Arthur* ! I shall be almost afraid to love *you* ! everything in this World is so uncertain.” Her Heart felt very sad, yet she tried to raise her weeping Eyes to the deep blue Heavens, and to believe that it was for the best. “And this will be mine

soon!" she said to herself, as her Gaze wandered far away to the dark Trees in the distance, under which lay brown Groups of Deer; "and a few Months ago, I was only a little Governess! but my Heart was much lighter then, and I would give all, yes, all! to keep my own kind Aunt with me a few Years longer; but I must not murmur, for she is longing to go. Ah! she *could* not stay here, without little *Mabel*!"

When it became known to the different Branches of the *Egerton* Family that *Alice* was the only Child of the eldest Daughter of *Sir Francis Trevellian*, and that her Aunt intended to leave the whole of her Fortune and Estate to her, it caused, as you may suppose, the greatest sensation. The *Countess of Courtland* regretted that she had really taken so little notice of the supposed Governess, that she should hardly know her again. *Lady Constance* said, her Intelligence was of a high order, and her Tastes (which were sadly Rustic at present) would doubtless acquire

quire an air of Elegance, as she moved into higher Circles. Even *Lady Blanche* raised her beautiful Head from the velvet Cushion (where it had reposed since the exertion of walking down to Breakfast a few Hours ago), and remarked in Silvery Accents, that a few Months in Paris would render her quite presentable—"Only, Dearest, do ask *Lisette* to send her that '*Recette unique*' for the Complexion; *la Couleur de Rose* so sadly prevails in her Face." "As she *has* turned out to be our Cousin," said *Lord Fitz-Loftus*, passing a very white Hand through his dark Hair, "it might be worse no doubt. I tell you, *Blanche*" (yawning), "she is a divine Creature to look at! I should have fallen in Love with her entirely, only they told me who she was, just in time; but, really, my Lady Mother, you know a charming Girl, with a Fortune like that, does not fall in one's Way every Day! and then, on her Father's side, the *Moores* of Killcranny Castle are an old Family. I'll look in the Peerage, and I declare if I find

find her Grandfather's fourth Cousin in it, I'll go and make Love to her." So saying, his Lordship walked languidly to the Book-shelf, adding, however, "It's tremendously hot, and almost too much trouble! but, of course, I sha'n't be long persuading *her*; I can settle it in no time, and return next Day. It would be impossible to exist longer in such an out-of-the-way Place as Norton."

And so it chanced that a few Days after this Conversation, *Lady Egerton* received a Letter from *Lord Percy Fitz-Loftus*, saying that he should most likely be in her Neighbourhood soon, and his Mother particularly wished him to inquire after the Health of her Cousin: he would therefore have much pleasure in spending a Day at the Abbey, if agreeable to her.

"How unfortunate that *Uncle Joe* is not here to amuse the young Man!" *Lady Egerton* said; "I never know what to do with him! *Alice*, Love, you must take him off my Hands; he is your Cousin now, remember."

"I am



“I am by no means elated by the discovery,” answered her Niece. “I particularly dislike young Men who look as if they were intended to be kept under a Glass Case; and I believe any Figure at *Madame Tussaud’s* is equally intelligent; however, I suppose I must be civil to him, if it is only to show him that I bear him no Ill-will for his inattention to me the last Time he was here.” And *Alice* smiled as she thought how strangely it sounded, that she was Cousin to the very fine Gentleman who had ignored her in the Park, and to the haughty *Lady Blanche*.

The next Day, the young Man and his French *Valet de Chambre* made their Appearance; but unfortunately for the Speed of his Love-making, *Alice* was so distant, though perfectly polite to him, that *Lord Fitz-Loftus* was unable to settle his Affairs quite so expeditiously as he had anticipated. Then his fair Cousin was so much with her Aunt, that of course he saw little of her; and so Day after Day passed away, and still his  
Lordship

Lordship lingered. Every Morning *Dr. Morgan* received from the solitary Inhabitant of the Drawing-room a haughty bend of the Head, and wondered what could keep the young Man at the Abbey at that time of Sickness and Anxiety. He was not a Gossip—the worthy Doctor—but he *did* rather wonder, and mentioned it to his Family at the Oaks; and then, as *Alice* had been seen at Church and once out walking with her young Relative, a Report of course got about that they were engaged, and would most likely be married before *Lady Egerton's* Death, as the Heiress was very young to be left without a Protector (this was *Miss Pry's* addition to the Report). So every one believed it, and said “What a good Match it would be!” and “What a fine young Couple” they were, and everything else which People always will say on such occasions.

The Report even reached *Mr. Hope*, who smiled benignly when he heard it; but when  
he

he was seated in his Study that Evening, with "Chalmers's Lectures" before him, he was so lost in Thought, that he never found out the Book was upside down, until about Twelve o'Clock, when the Glass of the Moderator Lamp (which had been flaring for half an Hour) cracked and fell to Pieces, and the Rector, having burned three of his Fingers, retired to Rest.

It was the Day after *Mr. Hope* had heard the Report of their Engagement, that *Lord Fitz-Loftus* announced to *Alice* his Intention of taking his Departure, much to the Satisfaction of his fair Cousin. As they were alone, the young Man thought the Moment had arrived when his jewelled Hand might be offered, and would of course be rapturously received. So after a great many pretty Speeches, he came to the point (indeed, he almost fell on his aristocratic Knees before her), and great indeed was his Astonishment and Dismay, when she kindly and gently declined the Honour proposed to her.

Never

Never having been thwarted in his Life before, he was on the Verge of getting into a Passion, when, thinking he had better try his Powers of Persuasion first, he assured *Alice* that he had Adored her from the Time of his seeing her in the Winter.

“Indeed!” replied *Alice*, with something like a Curl of her rosy Lip, “your Lordship’s Memory is better than mine! at all Events you were too near-sighted to recognise the *Governess* when we last parted! you will, however, find no difficulty in remembering the *Heiress* for the future.” This was severe for the gentle *Alice*, but her honest Heart scorned the worldly Motive which had transformed her so soon in his Eyes. “Am I more of a Lady *now*, than I was a few Months ago,” she thought, “that a little paltry Gold should enhance my Value so much?”

Finding her unwilling to receive his Addresses, and about to leave the Room, the disappointed young Man exclaimed, “*Miss Moore!*”

*Moore!* Alice, I am your Cousin, your nearest Male Relative. I have therefore a *right* to your Hand, or at least to the Disposal of it!"

"Then I must inform you," said *Alice* quietly, "that my Hand *is* disposed of. I am engaged, with the full Consent of my Aunt."

"Engaged!" exclaimed *Lord Percy*, in an irritated Tone; "may I inquire to whom, pray? the recent Discovery of your Relationship to *our* Family should lead you to form *no* Connexion which is not a high one."

"Thank you for your anxiety for my Well-doing," replied his Cousin; "you need be under no Uneasiness on that Point; I am engaged to a noble Man."

"Indeed!" cried the other; "some one has been before me, then; I must *insist* on knowing the Name of the favoured Individual."

"I regret that I cannot comply with your Wishes there," she answered, "as my Aunt  
desires

desires that the Name may remain unknown for a little While; but if I cannot tell you *who*, I will tell you *what* he is: He is a *noble Man* in every Sense of the Word!" she repeated proudly, while her Eye flashed with unusual Brilliancy and Spirit; "he is most truly noble, although having neither Titles nor Ancestry to boast of; a Man who has worked and fought in a higher and holier Cause than either your Forefathers or mine; a Man who would forfeit his Life sooner than do a mean Action: in plain Words, he is a wise, upright, and Christian Clergyman, and with *Lady Egerton's* Approbation I have promised to become his Wife."

As *Alice* left the Room soon afterwards, with a Carriage almost as stately as his Sister *Blanche*, Lord *Percy Fitz-Loftus*, Captain in H.M. Dragoon Guards, rang the Bell for his Dog-cart, and was soon dashing through the Village, with a Bearing as proud as ever, but feeling nevertheless in his own Estimation somewhat crestfallen.

That

That Evening *Lady Egerton* was worse, and *Alice* prepared to pass the Night by her Side. Old *Bridget* shook her Head, and said, "It's gone entirely that the Color 'll be from yer Cheek soon, Jewel, but it's my own Darlint that always *would* give the Freshness of her young Life for another. Albeit me Leddy has a Claim to you, Love, for it's a real Mother that she's been to ye, Mavourneen."

*Alice* sits in an easy Chair, reading by a shaded Lamp, while the Invalid sleeps only a few Minutes at a Time. She holds a Letter in her Hand, which was brought her a few Hours ago, and which seems rather to perplex her, as she smiles and then looks grave by Turns.

"It is so like *Arthur*!" she says at last, folding it up and walking softly over to shake up the Pillows for her Aunt. While she is doing this, let us take a Peep into that Letter which is so like *Arthur*.

It is written in a short, simple Style, and tells her that the Report of her Engagement

to

to come to you ; for soon, very soon, Darling, you will be left without me."

So that Evening, the good *Teresa*, ever ready to be useful or consoling, took up her Abode at the Abbey, a great Comfort to *Alice* and to all. The next Day *Lady Egerton* was sinking rapidly ; *Mr. Hope* had administered the last Consolations of Religion to her ; after which she had bade him a solemn Adieu, and placing the Hand of *Alice* in his own, looked all that she could not speak, for the Happiness of the two so dear to her.

That Night her Soul passed away to join little *Mabel* and her other loved ones in Heaven.

"May our Death be as peaceful, Dear," said *Miss Chirp*, wiping her eyes, and kissing the weeping *Alice* ; while old *Bridget* exclaimed,

"Come away, Darlint, and rest those weary Limbs of yer own—it's never again I'll leave yer, my poor lonely Lamb !"

And so her gentle Presence left the Abbey.

Oh !



Oh! there will be weeping to-night in the Village, in many an humble Home; for what Tale of Distress was ever pleaded to her in vain? what Object of Want or Misery was ever sent unrelieved from her Door? There is Mourning below in the Kitchen, too; and Nurse, who had always said the Mother would not be long after her Child, is sure that *Miss Moore* will be the next, and then what will become of them!

The Servants now regard their young Mistress with Love and Reverence, and *Mr. Staid* thinks the Property could not fall into better Hands. "Ever since the first Night I let her in," he says, "she glided across the Hall with a Step so firm and steady, that I thought it was a Mistake, and it could not be the *Governess*." It is true they look upon *Bridget O'Connor* with rather suspicious Eyes; and Nurse "doesn't see what they want of a wild Irisher," who talks "such heathenish Language," amongst them. But *Mrs. Crummie* says,  
"No

“No doubt the dear young Lady is used to her Ways, so *they* must not mind the Foreigneering Nurse, though she *does* gibber strangely, sure enough.”

The Funeral was over, and the beloved one at Rest: *Miss Chirp* and *Alice* were sitting together a few Days afterwards, when *Mr. Hope* was shown into the Room. Casting an anxious Glance at the young Heiress, in her deep Mourning Dress, he said he came to take leave of them for a little while, as he was going to the Seaside for a few Weeks, having found a Friend to supply his place.

“I am glad of it,” replied *Alice*; “it will do you good. You look pale—are you not well?”

“Not quite myself, just now,” he answered.

“Dear Friend!” said *Miss Chirp*, “you do too much, indeed you do; those three Services are beyond your Strength.”

He smiled, and said he was now going  
to

to be quite selfish, as *Dr. Morgan* had sent him away for some fresh Breezes. Then there was a long Pause, and no one spoke. *Miss Chirp* thought it quite natural, that *Alice* should be sad and quiet, so soon after her Aunt's Death; but it never entered her Head, unsuspicious little Body! that her Presence was at all *de trop*—how should she know any thing about it? So the Rector took leave of them, with a parting Injunction from the elder Lady, to be sure and button-up his Chest, whenever there was an *East Wind*.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE HEIRESS.

"Whereunto is money good? who hath it, hath much trouble and care."  
FROM THE GERMAN.

"*MISS Chirp* seems to have taken up her abode at the Abbey, *Jessie!*" said her Aunt one Day; "if that young Lady had taken a fancy to *me*, now, we might both have gone; and what a saving in Housekeeping it would have been! but *I* am too quiet, and am *always* overlooked, because I don't go about to attend dying Poachers, and all sorts of queer People, as *Teresa* does; well, Merit will be rewarded *some* Day!"

"I am glad *Miss Chirp* does stay," said *Jessie*, "poor *Alice Moore* must be so lonely in that great Place! *I* should expect to meet a Ghost on the Stairs every Night, if I lived there alone!"

By this time they had reached the "Oaks,"  
where

where they were to spend the Evening. Of course the Subject was renewed when they were all seated at the long Table in the Doctor's Dining-room; for little else had been talked of, or thought of, for some Weeks, but the young Heiress.

"Dear Girl," said little *Mrs. Morgan*, "she has a kind Heart, and was so grieved about our *Frank*, bless her."

"And she doesn't seem a bit altered," said *Jessie*; "she goes into the Cottages and nurses the Babies, and threads Needles for the old Women just the same."

"She *will* alter, you may be sure!" remarked *Miss Pry*. "I hear she is going away soon, to stay with some of her fine Relations, and depend upon it, her Head will be higher when she returns. Besides, here is this young Nobleman whom she is going to marry; the Earldom will soon come to him, they say, and when my Lady is a *Countess*, she will *quite* look down upon her Norton Friends."

"I don't believe she will *ever* do that," said *Lily*. "*Helen*, you know her better than we do; do *you* think she is engaged to *Lord Fitz-Loftus*?"

"Indeed I do not; she is far too sensible, I should say. I don't know any one good enough for her, and I am sure she is not the sort of Girl to marry for a Coronet."

"As to that," said *Miss Pry*, "I had it from the best Authority, I assure you; and more than that, the Lawyers have been down this Week, to make out the marriage Settlements."

*Helen* smiled, and *Dr. Morgan* observed, "The young Lady, I am told, is a good Woman of Business, and spends some hours with her Land Agent, two or three times a Week; indeed, she seems to have come into it all quite easily, and certainly *looks* a fitting Person for her present Position."

*Miss Moore's* Lawyers, *Messrs. Cute & Deeply*, had been to the Abbey, as *Miss Pry* stated. *Alice* had an Interview one Morning

Morning with the former, who had long transacted *Lady Egerton's* Business, and of whom she had the highest Opinion. View them together in the Library, with a Table covered with Papers and Parchments, long Agreements about Land, Farms, and Leases; *Mr. Cute* (a little bald-headed Gentleman, with a brisk manner) reading Documents and Deeds, as only Lawyers *can* read them; in that wonderful Gabble, without a single Comma, and without drawing a comfortable Breath; until at the End of some dozen Pages, he arrives at a full Stop, and asks his Listener if it is "clear to her?" Of course *Alice* has not understood a Word of it, and feels very much inclined to ask the bald-headed Gentleman, if it is Chinese. Assuming an air of deep Attention at first, after the second Line, she gave it up in Despair, and her Thoughts, travelling as rapidly as *Mr. Cute's* Language, had been for a little change of Air to the Sea-side, and came back just in time for her to reply,

"I have

"I have no doubt it is all right, *Mr. Cute*, and I will not trouble you to explain it. Do you think you will be likely to meet with a Purchaser soon?"

"My dear young Lady," answered the Lawyer, with a grave Face, "do you *really* still continue in the same Mind? have you considered the Sacrifice of your splendid Prospects, which must attend such an extraordinary Step? You are young, and know little of the World. Allow me, as a Friend, and an *old* Friend of your Aunt's, to intreat you to pause."

"I have quite made up my mind," answered *Alice*, smiling, "and I leave it all in your Hands. As I have an uncontrolled right over my own Property, why should I not please myself in disposing of it as I think fit? You are my Friend, as you say, and will aid me with your judicious advice, and I need not tell you that my dear Aunt has inspired me with perfect trust in your ability."

"Do



“Do I understand you that the whole bulk of the Property is to be sold, *Miss Moore*?” asked *Mr. Cute*.

“All,” answered *Alice*; “and all to be expended on the object I mentioned last Night, with the exception of a small Income for myself, supposing I should wish to remain single all my Life. I know very little of these things. What should I require, now, to live as *Miss Chirp* does, for instance?—Two Hundred—Three Hundred a Year?—Three Hundred would be ample, I should say, *Mr. Cute*?”

*Mr. Cute* had got very hot, and looked very much excited. Often he took off his Spectacles, and turned up his Eyes; rubbed his Eyes, and put his Spectacles on again; walked about the Room, sat down, and took a pinch of Snuff, tapped the Box, and made his Boots creak. At length, at the end of the last Observation made by *Alice*, he looked really concerned, and rather frightened, and coming up to her, said anxiously, “My dear young

young Lady, there is a great deal of Sickness about; you visit the Cottages; are you quite sure that you are entirely free from *Fever*? Excitement often affects the——”

“*Brain!* you would say,” put in *Alice*, laughing. “Feel my Hand, it is quite cool. I assure you I am in my right Mind, *Mr. Cute*; indeed, it strikes me that I am doing a very sensible thing, in getting rid of what is only a Burden, and brings me so many Cares.”

“And you really wish to build this Institution?”

“And *endow* it, *Mr. Cute*.”

“I think it my duty to inform *Admiral Trueman* of your intention; he will be grieved that the Abbey should pass into other Hands, *Miss Moore*.”

“As he is on his way to China, I trust it will be settled before he knows anything about it, *Mr. Cute*; but one stipulation I *must* make, if you please. You must be thoroughly acquainted with the Character of the  
the

the Purchaser, for I should only like it to come to those who would be as useful and kind in the Place as *Lady Egerton*. We will now join *Miss Chirp*, if you please."

*Mr. Hope* had been away Three Weeks, and no one had heard anything of him. At the end of that time, *Alice* was much harassed by repeated Invitations from various Members of her Family, among which was one from the *Countess of Courtland*, who informed her that "They were now in their quiet Country House, and were longing to become better acquainted with their Cousin; though she was sorry to say, *Fitz-Loftus* had joined his Regiment, and would be much disappointed not to be present," &c.

Before her Death, *Lady Egerton* had expressed a wish that *Alice* should become known to the different Branches of her Family; and that being the case, with rather a heavy Heart she prepared to comply.

The Morning before her Departure, *Alice* was seated at the Breakfast Table with her

Friend—a Pile of Letters before her ; as she opened one after another she smiled.

“What an important Person I am now, *Miss Chirp!* look here, don’t you pity me? Here is one asking me to be Patroness of a Bazaar; another for my Vote for some Charitable Institution; another, another, and another asking for my Name, for various Subscription Lists. Stay, here is one for you, *Miss Chirp,*” said the young Lady, passing a Letter from *Mr. Hope*, in a perfectly unconcerned Manner.

“Our good Rector talks of returning in about a Week,” said *Miss Chirp*, looking up after perusing it; “and has written at length upon Parochial Matters.”

“I shall not have the Pleasure of seeing him for some Time,” answered *Alice*; “but remember me kindly to him, if you please, *Miss Chirp.*”

\* \* \* \* \*

Week after Week passed away, and *Alice*  
remained

remained with her aristocratic Friends; not that there was anything particularly attractive to her active Nature in the Life they led; one Day was so very much like the other, that *Lady Constance* wondered they did not all turn into Dormice, and sleep away the Tediousness of Existence. *Lady Blanche* did sleep a good deal certainly, for she was generally to be found upon the Sofa, with a French Novel in her Hand, of which she sometimes got through two Pages a Day. Breakfast at Eleven, Lunch at Two, then a Drive with the *Countess* (which was rather trying, as her Ladyship was somewhat deaf), Home to Dinner at Seven, when some of the neighbouring Families were occasionally present—out of the Dining-room at Ten—Dozing and Scandal until the Gentlemen came in, and then Tea and small Talk (or, as *Uncle Joe* calls it, “Twaddle”)—perhaps Cards, and a little Music for another Hour, when everyone bids everyone “Good Night,” and everyone goes to Bed, tired with doing Nothing.

There

There was a good *Library* in the House, to be sure, so that *Alice* was able to have a real Feast from the best Authors.

It was now given out in Norton that the Abbey, the old grey Abbey, which had belonged for so long to the *Egerton* Family, was about to be sold. *Mr. Cute* had been down there very often lately, and it had got about somehow that the newly made Heiress had given up the greater part of her Property to some great Charitable Institution, but what that *was* no one could find out. At first, when it was known that she was staying with her Aunt the *Countess*, it was believed that she was about to marry her Cousin, and settle down at his Seat in —shire. So *Miss Pry* took in the *Morning Post* for a Month, that she might be the first to read “Marriage in High Life,” and trot over the Village with the News; but when *Mr. Cute* informed them that there was no Truth in the Report, and that his Lordship had left the Country for some Months; that *Miss Moore* was no longer

longer Heiress of the Estate, but had given up almost the whole of her large Fortune, and reserved a very moderate Income for herself; then *Miss Pry* began to suspect that there was *Insanity* in the Family, as she had long been given to understand; and at the next Tea Party she entertained her Visitors with a long List of *Digbys*, *Truemans*, and *Egertons*, who had either themselves, or their Ancestors, committed Suicide, been chained for Years in Dungeons underground, or perished in a state of hopeless Imbecility. As they were so very remotely connected with *Alice Moore*, however, there did not seem much point in it; but she concluded with, "You may be sure, my Dears, no one in their *Senses* would give up a Place like that! and, if you remember, there *was* something very bright and restless in the young Woman's Eye."

No one *does* remember this; but *Miss Chirp* says, "her Eyes were soft, and her Manner always self-possessed;" and the young People say

say they are not surprised at *Alice* for not wishing to spend her Life in that great rambling old Place now *Lady Egerton* and *Mabel* are dead.

“And it is just like *herself* to give away nearly all her Money, though doubtless it will be considered little short of Insanity in the Eyes of the World,” adds *Helen*.

*Miss Pry*, who is vexed at being contradicted, here treads upon the Toes of *Ben Hassan*, who gives a Squeak, and the Party break up.





## CHAPTER X.

### HEROES FROM THE CRIMEA.

"And art thou false, or art thou true !  
And dost thou smile or weep !  
O, much I have endured !—and now,  
Answer me, love ! whence comest thou ?—BURGER.

"He came again in the light of his fame,  
When the red campaign was over ;  
One heart that in secret had kept his name  
Was claimed by the soldier-lover."—MISS LONDON.

"OH, those Bells ! here, take the Baby, *Mary*, I am afraid I shall drop her, but she *must* be here to welcome him with the rest. Out of the Way, *Tom*, with your Trumpet, we shan't hear the Carriage—*Fred*, pray don't shout in that manner, yet—and *Jessie*, you silly little Thing, don't cry," said *Mrs. Morgan*, kissing her, and doing the same Thing herself directly afterwards.

They are all standing under the Porch at the Door of "The Oaks," on the look-out for

for *Frank*, of course. When I say *all*, I mean as many as can be squeezed together under that small Archway, for it would not hold the Doctor, his Wife, and twelve Children, to say nothing of *Jessie Grey* and *Helen Jackson*, who are also present; no, some are in the Hall and Passage, and some at the Gate; in fact, wherever there is Room to stand or sit, there is a little *Morgan* or a great *Morgan* or a middle-sized *Morgan*, with a face of eager expectation, to be seen.

“Oh, those Bells!” says the little Woman, with rather an hysterical Sob; “they might have tolled his Knell, my poor Boy! O, Children, how thankful we should be to have him brought safe Home again!”

“Don’t excite yourself, my Dear,” remarks the Doctor (quite as much excited himself).

“Sit down, now, Dear,” says thoughtful *Mary*, bringing her Mother a Chair.

“Hark!” exclaims *Lily*, leaning her flushed face upon the Shoulder of *Rose*,  
whose

whose arm is in that of *Willie* (the second Son, a tall Youth of eighteen, who thinks it more manly to be quiet and composed).

“I wonder if he’ll bring me Home the Head of a Russian!” cried little *Tom*; “he always said he would.”

“I wonder if he’ll have a great Beard, like the Turks,” said *Fred*.

“I won’t kiss him, if he has,” remarked *Lucy*. “Will his Arm be in a Sling, *Mary*?”

“I hear them *now, really!*” said *Rose*. “O, I hope he won’t look very pale and altered, or I shall faint!”

“How foolish you Girls are! why can’t you take Things *quietly*?” said *Willie*.

“Hurrah!” cries *Fred*; “what a dust! Hurrah! Here they are! Shout, Boys! Hip, hip, hurrah!”

“*Frank, old Fellow! Frank! Frank! Frank!*” is screamed out by half a dozen young Voices as the dusty Carriage at length dashes up to the Door, and *Frank* himself jumps out, with a Step as light as ever, and

is

is almost smothered and choked for the next five Minutes, by the Kisses and Hugs in Store for him.

Then he turns to the Door again, to assist with ready Hand the helpless-looking and crippled Soldier, whom the Doctor can scarcely recognise as the once active and dashing *Harry Brooks*. *Frank's* Friend, the good Chaplain, has also alighted, and together they carry him into the House, and *Mary*, quiet and useful as ever, stands ready with a Glass of Wine, and a Pillow for his Head; and we will leave him upon the Sofa in the Dining-room, where blind *Richard*, supported by *Ellen*, is waiting to receive him. We will leave them there, and not intrude upon the sacred Joy of that old, white-headed Man, who is sobbing over his recovered Son.

“ And now, Father, Mother, and all of you,” says *Frank*, “ here is my Friend; come, every one of you, and shake Hands with him! you would perhaps never have seen me Home again ”

again" (and his Voice faltered) "but for him."

"My dear Fellow," replies the handsome sunburned Chaplain in a low Voice, "don't think of *me* yet, they have not half done with *you*; I shall go away, I can't stand it, *Frank*."

*Go away!* What an Idea! when the Doctor's Hand holds his like a Vice; and all the rest are waiting to greet their Brother's Friend!

"*Jessie!*" cries the young Soldier (*she* has got into a Corner, and is laughing and crying by the side of *Helen Jackson*, who is thinking of making her Escape when she can); "*Jessie*, let me introduce to you my dear Friend" (*Frank* takes the Chaplain by the Arm, and leads him up to her, and as they all fall back, he stands Face to Face with *Helen*,) "whom you have all heard so much about;—*Herbert Warren*."

It is not *Jessie Grey* that the Chaplain sees, but *Helen Jackson*; the Playmate of his Youth, his once promised Bride.

It

It is not *Herbert*, the lost, the dead, that *Helen* gazes at so wildly, but his *Spirit*, come to reproach her, with his calm dark Eyes! It must be so! and *Helen* feels her Senses leaving her beneath his steady Gaze, and, growing paler and paler every moment, is caught by the Doctor, who comes up just in time to receive her, as she falls forward.

*Mrs. Jackson* stands once more by the Bedside of her Child. *Helen* is very calm now, for *Herbert's* Voice recalled her from the Swoon into which she had fallen, and told her that he was still upon Earth. They are both at Home again, the Mother and Daughter. *Helen* bewildered, and almost overpowered, with this unexpected Happiness. The Widow, with a load of Self-reproach upon her Heart, kneels, with Face buried in her Hands, beside the pale Form, whose young Life had been rendered so miserable by her unhappy Manœuvrings.

“I have sinned deeply; but for your sake, *Helen*,” murmurs *Mrs. Jackson*. “I believed

lieved him dead for some time myself; then, while you were away, came his own Letter saying it was his Cousin *Halbert Warren*, who had died of Fever at Bengal, and the mistake had arisen in their names being so much alike. Your Aunt and I both agreed, that as you were calm and composed by that time, it would be better not to undeceive you; at least until you had made what I considered a suitable Match. I intended to inform you that *Herbert* was still living, after your Marriage with *Harry Wildman*; but then came your Illness, and I have put it off from time to time, fearing to excite you too much. And now, my Child, do you forgive your poor Mother? whose Fault all through your Life has been a too great Carefulness and Anxiety for your worldly Advantage. I hope it is over now, and I shall freely give my Blessing to you both, for I believe, after all, *Herbert Warren* only is worthy of my matchless Daughter."

*Helen*

*Helen* had listened with averted Face to this painful Recital of her Mother's Weakness and Deception. A few Months ago it would have raised a torrent of Passion and Tears, but that Time was passed, and, however she had acted, was she not still her Mother? So the pale Girl only raised her dark Eyes for a Moment, and murmured in a low, broken Voice, "Oh, Mother, Mother!"—three simple Words, but how much Reproach and Compassion were mingled in their Tones, the Heart of *Mrs. Jackson* alone could feel.

*Mr. Hope* disappeared from the Village for the next Month. What *for* no one could say, but *Miss Chirp*. There was a Smile upon *her* calm Face which said she knew more than other People. And *Teresa* has taken possession of the Rectory, strange to say, and is very busy there, in her own brisk, but quiet Manner. *Herbert Warren* is there also, in the Rector's Absence, taking the Duty for him; and *Frank Morgan* and himself



self often draw the crippled Soldier *Harry Brooks* about the pretty Grounds.

The Chaplain is constantly at the Doctor's, and the *Morgan* Family cannot make enough of him. Of course *Jessie Grey* and *Helen* are there also very frequently, and every one is happy in their Happiness.

"Really, old Fellow," says *Frank*, with his own joyous Laugh, "it is *worth* those two Years in the Crimea, to come back and find everything so jolly at Home! it is worth a hundred freezing Nights in the Trenches, to have you all round me, you tiresome, noisy, teasing Children!" (There are half a dozen round him, Three on his Knees, and Three trying to get there!) "What an unfortunate Being I am to possess such a retentive Memory! I shall have to tell these Stories over and over again, for the rest of my Life!"

"Tell us about the Battle," says *Fred*.

"No, that's so horrid!" says *Lucy*. "Tell us about the Party in your Tent, on Christmas Day."

"No

“No, no!—about the poor young Russian you gave some Water to, and the Picture of his Mother, and the Lock of Hair you were to send her,” says *Katie*.

“Poor Fellow!” replies *Frank*. “No, that’s too melancholy. I’ll tell you how I used to think about you all every Night on Guard, especially when it was Starlight. I always looked at the Great Bear, because we used to see that from the Terrace, *Lily*. I used to stand *there* in imagination, and peep through the Shutters, and fancy my Father reading the Paper, Mother and *Mary* with a great Basket of Work before them, the Girls playing the Piano, and *Fred* his Flute, *Tom* and *Lucy* dancing, *Dora* nearly asleep on the Rug with *Dash*. Oh! I could see you all then in my Fancy, but it is better to see you all in Reality.”

“Bless you, *Frank*!” says the little Woman; “you never *shall* go away again, shall he, my Dear?”

Soon after this, *Mr. Hope* and *Alice* were married,

married, very quietly, and not from Standly Park; so *Miss Pry* did not read it in the *Morning Post*. No, in the pretty Kentish Village, where *Alice* had spent her Childhood and Youth, from the Parsonage of her kind Friend, the old Clergyman. The venerable Man, who had buried her Grandmother, and prepared herself for Confirmation, united her to the good Rector of our Village.

“Och! Mavourneen,” says old *Bridget*, as she kissed her Darling in her bridal Attire, “so you won’t keep up the Glory of the Family, and marry the big Lord! well, the *Moore*s of Killcranny always *would* have their own way! and ye’ll be a rare Jewel, though ye’ll only be set in a small Casket of a House, instead of the auld Abbey, which was a fine Place (barring the Ghosts)! And *Masther Hope*’s a Gentleman from Head to Foot, and, maybe, he’ll be Archbishop some Day, or Pope of Rome, which is the same Thing, Darlint!”



## CHAPTER XI.

### CONCLUSION.

“ So runs the round of life from hour to hour.”—TENNYSON.

THE Abbey is sold! *Mr. Cute* informs *Mr. Staid*; and it is the Wish of the new Owner that all the Servants should remain. It has not yet transpired who is the new Possessor of the Property, even *Alice* does not know that.

*Mr. Hope* and his Wife are now settled in their quiet Rectory. All the Parties given in honour of their Arrival are over. *Alice* is an old Bride, and People have ceased to talk about them.

*Herbert* and *Helen*, *Jessie* and *Frank*, were married the same Day, so that our Village  
was

was quite gay a few Weeks ago ! How *Miss Pry* ever came to give her Consent to the Match between *Frank* and her Niece, it would take too long to explain ; but *Alice* (who is likely to turn out the good Fairy, after all) had a great deal to do with it ; and *Frank*, who seems now to think Home the best Place, is to settle down and help his Father, who is getting Old.

*Alice* and *Mr. Hope* have been requested by the new Occupant of the Abbey to be present at his Arrival. So they wend their way through the Park, on the Evening that he is expected, and *Alice* stands once more within the lofty Hall of which she is no longer Mistress.

“ Does my little Wife sigh for the Splendour she has resigned ? ” asks the Rector, with a Smile.

“ What a Question, *Arthur* ! You know as well as I do, I should never have been happy until that *Sketch of the Rectory was finished* ! But here is the Carriage, and I am  
all

all anxiety to know whom our Neighbours are to be. How quiet the Dogs are, they don't bark the least!"

"Why *should* they bark?" says the Voice of the Individual who has just alighted. "You know better, *Danger!*—down, *Bounce!* Where's this little Niece of mine, *Alice Moore*, or *Hope*, I *should* say? Have you fotgotten *Uncle Joe*?" And the astonished Face of the young Lady is kissed by the old Sailor, who looks rather ill, and is still rheumatic.

"So you thought to give me the slip, did you?" he continued, when they were seated round the Dinner-table, "and what was still more foolish, to let this old Place pass into other Hands; but the old Mariner was too sharp for you, and knew all about it, though you thought he was gone to China! I was taken ill, my Dear, and didn't go, and I have been at Southampton all this time. So when I heard this mad Scheme of yours, I told *Mr. Cute* I would purchase the Abbey, but  
he

he might keep it quiet. I have more Money than I know what to do with, and may as well spend it in this Way as any other. I have no Relations now, so it will come to you, after all, again, little Woman, or to your Son, if you ever have one, on Condition that you name him after me, and make a Sailor of him. You see, my Dear, I shall still float about myself, but I shall want a Home to come to when I *am* on Land; and I could not bear the old Place where our little Sun-beam lived and died, to pass into the Hands of Strangers. And so you are my Niece after all! and *her* Cousin!" And the old Man's Eyes glistened, and he spake no more that Evening.

\* \* \* \* \*

A Year after this, any one who passed through the Village of Norton, might notice a handsome and massive Building rising through the Trees, in the large Meadow

near the Church. It is not yet finished, but no Expense is spared in its Erection, and it bids fair to be an Ornament to the Place, as well as a happy "Home" for "friendless Governesses." And this is the Object for which *Alice Hope* (who had once herself been homeless and alone) gave up the greater Part of her Property. *Miss Chirp*, ever ready to do Good, is to be the Matron; and many a sad and drooping Heart will doubtless be cheered by the kind Sympathy, and sunny Smile of the good *Teresa*.

A neat Lodge is already to be seen at the Entrance, and the heavy Gates will be opened by the Porter, *Harry Brooks*, or his neat Wife, *Ellen*. *Harry*, who considers the Loss of his Leg fully compensated for, by the bright Crimean Medal on his Breast, is very happy; for is he not considered next to "*Captain Frank*," the greatest Man in the Village!

And *Helen*! what has become of her? (*Miss Pry* considers it an exceedingly foolish Thing,



Thing, and can't think what is come to all the young People in these Days); but she and her Husband are to sail in a short Time for distant Climes. Yes, *Helen*, the beautiful, the accomplished, the London "Belle," the once useless and fashionable young Lady, is about to accompany the good *Herbert Warren*, as a Missionary's Wife.

"Well, I *do* call *that* a Waste of Talents and Intellect," says *Angelina*, "to spend the rest of her Life in teaching little *North American Icelanders* or *Hottentots*, or whatever they call those *Chinese Tribes*! but the young People will live to regret it, if they don't die of Yellow Fever first, which of course they *will* do."

\* \* \* \* \*

How softly the Twilight steals into the Window of the Rectory this peaceful Summer Evening. *Mr. Hope* thinks so, as he indulges

indulges himself in reclining on the Sofa, after the Labours of the Day, while the soft Voice of *Alice* has almost read him to Sleep. It is *Longfellow's* exquisite Poem "Resignation," which she has been reading, and now she looks up with earnest Eyes, and says in that low Voice, with which she always speaks of sacred Things:—

"Oh *Arthur*, it is very beautiful, but I don't like the Idea of there being no *Children* in Heaven. Tell me, (for you know every Thing,) what he means by "Not as a Child shall we again behold her."

"For when with raptures wild  
In our embraces we again enfold her,  
She will not be a Child;" etc.

*Mr. Hope* tells her to get her Hat, and come to the Churchyard, and he will consider her Question by the little Grave. And so they wander out, through the fragrant Garden, and under the Jasmine Tree, and into the silent Churchyard, where they often go;  
and

and sitting by *Mabel's* Grave, they talk till the Moon is bright, and the Stars come out; and then they go Home, and *Alice* dreams of Angels that Night, and little *Mabel* sleeps sweetly under the Daisies.

*THE END.*













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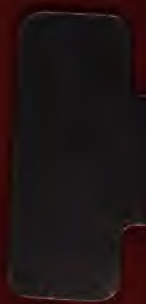
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